

AND SNOW

Hot

Great Patriotic War: Unknown Won

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Hot  
snow  
Stalingrad

Moscow  
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"Hot Snow" - this famous novel entered the golden fund of military prose, the film of the same name became an unconditional classic of the genre, and the phrase "The main thing is to knock out their tanks" is winged. December 1942, when Manstein's tanks tried to break through to the aid of the 6th Army encircled in Stalingrad, is rightfully considered the turning point of the war: crown this counterattack with success, break Paulus out of the "cauldron" - and the whole history of the Second World War could go down the drain. completely different scenario...

After analyzing the course of the battle and the chances of the parties, this book

proves that in mid-December everything literally hung in the balance (Manstein himself later recalled that from the advanced formations of his advancing troops "you could already see a glow in the sky over Stalingrad", which was less than 40 km away) and from the outcome of desperate battles on the outer ring of the "cauldron", in the hot bloody snows beyond the Myshkova River, where our infantry and artillery knocked out German tanks at the cost of huge losses, the fate of the war and the future of Russia depended.

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"The fate of the Reich was decided  
not in Stalingrad, but in bloody battles on  
the small but deep Aksai Yesaulovsky  
River."

Mellenthin, former chief of staff of the  
45th Panzer Corps

#### INTRODUCTION

A year and a half of selfless struggle, the huge human and material sacrifices of the Soviet people in the winter of 1942/43 were crowned with a major strategic victory, expressed in the encirclement and defeat of the 6th and part of the 4th German armies near Stalingrad, thereby demonstrating that military art, which was absent during the first 16 months of the war. The edge of the fascist knife, deeply pierced into Soviet territory, was finally broken forever. That is why the Battle of Stalingrad is rightfully considered a turning point in the course of the Great Patriotic War.

At the same time, the destruction of the grouping of troops of General Field Marshal F. Paulus was only part of a grandiose strategic plan conceived by the Soviet command and the full implementation of which could significantly affect the course of the Great Patriotic War. In any large-scale encirclement operation, the troops conducting it must always create two fronts: internal and external. The task of the internal front is to prevent a breakthrough and the defeat of the encircled enemy grouping. The task of the external force is to prevent the deblockade (liberation) of the encircled grouping by an outside strike and, if possible, to expand the scale of the operation to the maximum. And it's hard to say which role

fronts is more important for the successful development of operational art to the framework of strategy?

In the battle near Stalingrad, the main forces of the Donskoy and part of the forces of the Stalingrad front were thrown to the internal front. When the Soviet command

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convinced of the successful completion of the encirclement operation and began to count the enemy forces that were in the ring, then to some extent she was even afraid of the results. Instead of the supposed grouping of 80-90 thousand people, the 6th and part of the forces of the 4th armies of the enemy, with a total number of over 200 thousand people, turned out to be surrounded. Therefore, it is not surprising that the main forces were concentrated against the encircled grouping.

Under these conditions, the outer front of the encirclement could seem less significant, not requiring the maximum effort of forces and means. However, it was precisely by an offensive on the external front that the Soviet command planned, developing the offensive, to strike in the general direction on Rostov-on-Don in order not only to defeat the Don Army Group operating in the Stalingrad direction, but also to threaten the defeat Army Group "A", operating in the Kuban and in the North Caucasus.

The outer front of the encirclement near Stalingrad was initially created at the expense of formations of the 5th Panzer Army of the Southwestern Front and the 51st Army of the Stalingrad Front, the formations of which turned out to be weakened by previous battles and stretched out on a wide front. This circumstance, as well as the proximity of the line of their location from the grouping surrounded by Stalingrad, created the illusion of a possible breakthrough of the encirclement by an outside strike in the German command. This operation, which received the code name "Winter Thunderstorm", was entrusted to one of the most talented German commanders, E. von Manstein, who, in turn, put one of the best tank commanders of the Wehrmacht, General G. Hoth, at the forefront of the deblocking strike.

The disruption of the deblocking operation of the German troops demanded from the Soviet command a huge strain of forces and means, and from the commanders of the armies, commanders of formations, units, subdivisions of special military art, personal heroism and courage. "Zim

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nyaya thunderstorm "not only failed, but also on a number of

boards there was a further offensive of the Soviet troops. True, the plan of Operation Saturn was not fully realized. Despite this, the events of the second half of 1942 - early 1943, which took place near Stalingrad, became a bright page in national and world history, which all progressive mankind knows and remembers.

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In the 1970s and 1980s, students of the M.V. Frunze Military Academy, as planned classes, went to the Volgograd region for several days to study the events of the Battle of Stalingrad on the ground. Then most of them first appeared on this legendary land, abundantly watered with human blood and forever inscribed in the history of the Great Patriotic War. Many of them fought on this land in 1942, were injured and even killed their fathers and grandfathers.

In addition, officers of foreign armies who were trained at the M.V. Frunze Military Academy were necessarily taken to Volgograd. We remember the serious and very concentrated faces of the listeners during the lessons. I remember how, at one of the classes held on the slopes of Mamaev Kurgan, the teacher picked up a handful of earth and found several bullets and shrapnel in it at once. I remember how, at the edge of the Volga, in front of his comrades, the captain of the GDR army, whose grandfather died in Stalingrad, was crying before reaching the great Russian river. I remember how veterans decorated with orders, young people, children who came to the Hill of Russian Glory from all over the vast Soviet country, not remembering their national ambitions, united by one GREAT SOLDIER BROTHERHOOD, climbed the stairs of the Ma Mayev Kurgan in an endless stream of people.

The military-historical trips of students to Volgograd continued until the moment when the military

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The department of democratic Russia did not "save" money on the study and propaganda of the Soviet period in the history of our Motherland.

But it was thanks to military-historical trips that teachers and students were able to expand and deepen their knowledge of the section "Battle of Stalingrad". At the same time, each of them became convinced that even in its history, which was studied by hundreds of people, there are still many "blank" spots and that as time goes by, it will become more and more difficult to cover them. Stereotypes are affirmed, witnesses pass away, do-

documents... the new generation is gradually losing interest in the events of 70 years ago. In the understanding of many modern teenagers, Stalingrad is not a special milestone in the history of the Fatherland, but abundant shooting and effective cinematic tricks in which both Russians and Germans look equally colorful.

Of course, the enemy always deserves respect, especially the Germans, who in 1941 and 1942 were able to inflict a serious defeat on the Red Army and reach Stalingrad. The troops of the 6th Army of General Field Marshal F. Paulus also deserve respect, who, being surrounded, despite hunger, deprivation, and the death of many comrades, continued to fight for more than a month. The formations and units of the army group "Goth" deserve respect, which selflessly rushed to the rescue of their comrades. Many German generals and officers deserve respect, who skillfully led the troops subordinate to them, having managed to ensure their temporary tactical success.

But even more respect deserve those generals, officers and troops who were able to win this battle and turn tactical successes into operational and even strategic ones. These were Soviet people who fulfilled their task with honor and contributed to the turning point in the Great Patriotic War, taking a big step towards the future Victory. Among them are A. M. Vasilevsky, front commanders K. K. Rokossovsky and A. I. Eremenko, army commanders R. Ya. Malinovsky and N. I.

Trufanov, commander of the air army T. T. Khryukin, large tank commanders S. I. Bogdanov, V. T. Volsky, P. A. Rotmistrov and many others.

Many books have been written on the history of the Battle of Stalingrad and many films have been made. We do not set ourselves the task of rewriting it or supplementing it with something essential. Our task lies in a deeper and more detailed disclosure of one of its well-known pages related to the attempt of the German command to release the grouping surrounded by Stalingrad by an outside strike, and, consequently, the repulse of this attempt by the Soviet troops. At the same time, avoiding lyrical digressions in both directions, we tried to write only based on verified facts and archival documents. Therefore, we apologize in advance to those readers who find this book boring and uninteresting.

## THE BIRTH OF A GREAT PLAN

In mid-September 1942, when fierce battles were still unfolding in the Stalingrad area, the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command began planning operations for the winter campaign of 1942/1943.

factors, it was decided to strike the main blow in the southwestern direction and, above all, go on the counteroffensive near Stalingrad.

The counteroffensive of the Soviet troops near Stalingrad included three closely linked and staged operations: "Uranus" - the Southwestern, Don and Stalingrad fronts (November 19-30, 1942) - breaking through the defense, defeating the flank groupings of the enemy and surrounding him the 6th field and part of the forces of the 4th tank armies; "Saturn" ("Little Saturn") - the left wing of the Voronezh, South-Western and Stalingrad fronts (December 12-31, 1942) - disruption of enemy attempts to release the encircled grouping and develop a counteroffensive on the outer front of the encirclement; "Ring" - Don Front (January 10 - February 2, 1943) - liquidation of the encircled group. The difference in the goals of operations, the number of forces and means involved predetermined the variety of methods for defeating the enemy. In Operation Uranus, the enemy grouping was surrounded by blows in converging directions. In Operation Little Saturn, a frontal attack was delivered in combination with an attack on the flank of the defending enemy troops. In Operation Ring, the encircled enemy grouping was dissected and destroyed along

parts.

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By the autumn of 1942, the Soviet High Command was completing the formation and training of large strategic reserves, which included a significant number of tank and mechanized units and formations, and artillery. Stocks of other military equipment and ammunition were created. This allowed the Headquarters of the Supreme Command in September to draw a conclusion about the possibility of inflicting a powerful blow on the Nazi troops in the very near future. The place of inflicting a crushing defeat on the enemy was clear from the very beginning - Stalingrad. It was necessary to defeat the troops of the 6th field and 4th tank armies as quickly as possible and remove the threat looming over Stalingrad.

Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov wrote: "Having gone through all the possible options, A.M. Vasilevsky and I decided to propose to Stalin the following plan of action: first, continue to wear down the enemy with active defense; the second is to start preparing a counteroffensive in order to inflict such a blow on the enemy in the Stalingrad region that would drastically change the strategic situation in the south of the country in our favor" (Zhukov G.K. Memoirs and reflections. - M.: Nauka. - T. 2. 1978. - S. 75-76).

As a result of hard work, a counteroffensive plan was developed, which received the code name "Uranus". His goal was to have the 400

km to defeat the enemy's strategic grouping in the Stalingrad area, wrest the strategic initiative from him and create conditions for subsequent offensive operations on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. The troops of the Southwestern (commander Lieutenant General N. F. Vatutin), Don (commander Lieutenant General K. K. Rokossovsky) and Stalingrad (commander Colonel General A. I. Eremenko) fronts were involved in the operation. , long-range aviation formations, aviation of the neighboring Voronezh Front and the Volga River Flotilla.

In mid-October, the troops of the German army group

eleven

"B" were forced to go on the defensive in almost the entire zone, except for Stalingrad, where the troops of the 6th Army continued the offensive with the aim of finally capturing Stalingrad. To reinforce the strike force, the German troops operating on its flanks were replaced by Romanian ones and transferred to the directions of strikes. Such a replacement by Romanian, Italian and Hungarian troops sharply reduced the combat effectiveness of the defense in the Serafimovich areas and south of Stalingrad, that is, in the places of the planned strikes of the Soviet troops. The strengthening of their strike groupings allowed the enemy to increase the force of strikes. For several days and nights, fighting did not stop in the streets, in houses, in factories, on the banks of the Volga. After fierce fighting, our units, which suffered heavy losses, managed to keep only small areas of the city in their hands.

At the beginning of November, the enemy made several more attempts to capture the city, but to no avail. The general operational situation of the German troops in the area of Stalingrad became much more complicated. Heavy losses were suffered, divisional and corps reserves were gone, and insufficiently combat-ready Romanian, Italian and Hungarian troops were on the flanks of Army Group B.

In mid-November 1942, the German Army Group B (commanded by General M. Weichs) was defending on a front of about 1,400 km. It included 7 armies, of which 4 were allied.

On the left wing of Army Group "B" in the area northwest of Voronezh, the 2nd German Army (commander General G. Salmuth) operated, covering the Kursk direction. Here, in a 210-kilometer strip, there were 15 divisions. To the southeast of the 2nd Army, on the right bank of the river. Don, the 2nd Hungarian Army (commander General G. Yanyi) covered the Kharkov direction. Its 13 divisions occupied a defense zone 190 km wide. Further along the Don, from Novaya Kalitva to Veshenskaya, the Lovgrad direction was covered by the 8th Italian

army (commanded by General I. Gariboldi). Its 13 divisions and 4

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brigades. To the east, along the Don, from Veshenskaya to Kletskaya, on a 140-kilometer front, the 3rd Romanian Army (commanded by General P. Dumitrescu), which had 11 divisions, defended itself. She covered the Rostov direction. Further to the southeast, from Kletskaya to Stalingrad inclusive, the 6th German Army (17 divisions) operated in a strip of 230 km. South of Stalingrad, along the Kuporosnoe-Ivanovka line, the 4th German Panzer Army (commanded by General G. Goth) went on the defensive. Further south along the Sarpinsky Lakes was the newly formed and operationally subordinate to General Gotu, the 4th Romanian Army (commander from November 21, General S. Constantinescu). Both of these armies (9 divisions) defended on a 210-kilometer front. West of Astrakhan, the 16th motorized division, which was part of the 4th German tank army, operated. Ensuring the right flank of Army Group B, it controlled a rather extensive section of the front in the Kalmyk steppes (over 170 km) up to the river. Manych, where the dividing line between army groups "A" and "B" passed. The 4th German tank and 4th Romanian armies covered the Salsk direction.

In total, Army Group B had 82 divisions and 5 brigades. Of these: 43 German divisions, including 4 armored and 4 motorized, and 1 motorized brigade; 18 Romanian, including 1 tank and 4 cavalry; 10 Italian, including 1 motorized and 3 mountain rifle (Alpine), and 4 brigades, including 3 blackshirt brigades (fascist militia) and 1 cavalry; 11 Hungarian divisions, including 1 tank division. It was the most powerful of the enemy's strategic groupings operating on the Soviet-German front. It included almost a third (31.6%) of all the forces of Nazi Germany and its allies, thrown by them against the Soviet Union. Army Group B was supported by the main forces of the 4th Air Fleet (commanded by General W. Richthofen), which numbered over 1,200 aircraft.

The main forces of army group "B" - 5 army units

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divisions - fought in the Stalingrad direction: the 6th field and 4th tank armies of the German army, the 3rd and 4th Romanian armies and the main forces of the 8th Italian army. This enemy grouping included 49 divisions, including 5 tank and 5 motorized divisions, and 2 brigades. Of these, in the army reserves on-



4 divisions walked (1 motorized, 1 cavalry and 2 infantry). The average number of infantry divisions fluctuated between 7-8 thousand German, 11-12 thousand Romanian and 14 thousand Italian. The Stalingrad grouping of German troops and their allies included almost 1/5 of the infantry and about 1/3 of the tank and motorized divisions operating on the Soviet-German front. It was directly supported from the air by the 8th Aviation Corps (commander General M. Fiebig), the most powerful air formation in the fascist Luftwaffe. This air corps in the German Air Force was considered shock. Having an unusually strong composition - 9 air squadrons and several reconnaissance detachments, it numbered more than 600 aircraft, half of the entire force of the 4th Air Fleet.

The main forces of the enemy strike force were concentrated in the area of Stalingrad, and its flanks on the Middle Don and south of Stalingrad were covered by Romanian troops. The operational formation of all armies was one-echelon with the allocation of a reserve. Army reserves were located at a distance of 25-50 km from the front edge. The average operational densities were: one division per 18 km of front, 11 guns and mortars, and about 1 tank per 1 km of front.

Despite the fact that the enemy had been preparing the defense for more than a month, it was poorly equipped in terms of engineering. The tactical zone consisted of one strip 5-6 km deep, which included two positions. Each position was equipped with one, and in the most important directions - with two trenches with wire and mine-explosive barriers. There was a significant number of bunkers (three or four per 1 km of the front). In the operational depth of any pre-prepared lines and during

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everything was not. The vulnerability of the defense was that the units and subunits were stretched over fairly wide areas, and this, in the absence of sufficient reserves and shallow depth, only exacerbated its weaknesses.

Starting from mid-October, the German command realized that events were developing contrary to their plans. In the first half of November, both air reconnaissance and other sources invariably confirmed that the Soviet command was not only reinforcing its troops in Stalingrad, but was also concentrating large forces northwest and south of the city. The information received left no doubt about the forthcoming major offensive of the Red Army. Of particular concern was the grouping of Soviet troops concentrated northwest of Stalingrad, on the Middle Don. The fact that the Red Army will strike its blow there, neither the commanders of the armies, nor the commander of Army Group "B", nor the main

they no longer doubted the command of the ground forces, but were lost in conjectures: when and exactly in what sector this would happen (Schroer N. Mappegaa ... \$ 61 tayeze Ragope. - Gepsensv, 1953. - 5. 112-113).

In connection with the prevailing situation, the commander of the 6th Army, General Paulus, proposed to withdraw troops from the Stalingrad region beyond the Don, thus reducing the greatly extended front and using the freed forces to create stronger reserves. He was supported by the commander of Army Group B, General Weichs, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, General Zeytler. However, soon the Chief of the General Staff, under pressure from Hitler, changed his mind and, on behalf of the Fuhrer, transmitted the following directive to Paulus: "The Russians no longer have any significant reserves and are no longer capable of conducting an offensive on a large scale. From this basic opinion one should proceed from any assessment of the enemy "(Voen. - ist. zhurn. 1960. No. 2. - P. 93).

A similar point of view of the German high command is set out in the "First Supplement to the Opera

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Order No. 1 of October 21, which stated: "The Russians at the present time, apparently, are hardly in a position to launch a major offensive with far-reaching goals" (EgapK@i a/M, 1963. Va. 2. - 5. 71).

Instead of withdrawing the troops of the right wing of Army Group B beyond the Don, the 6th Army was ordered to capture the city as soon as possible, using new "assault tactics". To accomplish this task, it was reinforced by five assault engineer battalions from the OKW reserve (Adam V. Decree. Op. - P. 136).

This decision of the German high command was explained by the fact that Hitler could not go ahead with the implementation of the Paulus plan: to leave the city - the main goal of the Wehrmacht's summer offensive on the Eastern Front, because this already affected his personal prestige. After all, the main strategic principle of the fascist dictator was to never, under any circumstances, leave the previously occupied territory. He outlined his credo with the utmost clarity in one of his appeals to the German people in October 1942: "The German soldier remains where his foot sets foot" (Westphal 3. and others. Fatal decisions / Translated from German - M. , 1958. - S. 162).

Realizing that the high command rejected all fears regarding the impending offensive of the Red Army in the Stalingrad region, the command of Army Group "B" itself began to take measures to strengthen

the right flank. To this end, it began partial regroupings of troops, intending to use the formations withdrawn from the front to create their own reserves. Three or four days before the Soviet troops went on the counteroffensive, three tank and motorized divisions, as well as the headquarters of the 48th tank corps, were withdrawn to the reserve. But the time had already been lost, the measures taken by Weichs turned out to be belated and insufficient. The command of the Wehrmacht at the decisive moment was unable to concentrate its main efforts where, as subsequent events showed, the question of the further course of the Second World War was being decided.

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By mid-November, the main strike force of the Wehrmacht in the Stalingrad direction was opposed by the troops of three Soviet fronts - the South-Western, Don and Stalingrad. Their main forces were concentrated against the flanks of the German grouping, occupying an enveloping position in relation to it. The troops of the Southwestern Front were on the defensive in a 250-kilometer strip from Upper Mamont to Kletskaya. Their main forces were concentrated on bridgeheads in the areas of Serafimovich and Kletskaya. The 3rd Romanian Army and the main forces of the 8th Italian Army were defending in front of the Southwestern Front. The Don Front operated in a 150-kilometer zone - from Kletskaya to Erzovka, having two bridgeheads on the right bank of the Don - in the areas of Sirotinskaya and north of Trekhostrovskaya. The front was opposed by three corps of Paul's army. The Stalingrad Front was defending in a 450-kilometer strip - from the village of Rynok to Akhtub, which is 130 km west of Astrakhan. The 51st army corps of the 6th army, the 4th tank and 4th Romanian armies acted against it.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FORCES AND MAINTENANCE OF  
THE PARTIES IN THE STALINGRAD DIRECTION TO  
THE BEGINNING OF THE COUNTEROFFENSIVE

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Stalingrad. Event. Impact. Symbol. - M.: Progress - Academy. 1995. - S. 59.

In total, three Soviet fronts consisted of 10 general armored, tank and 4 air armies, 5 tank, 2 mechanized and 3 cavalry corps, 34 from

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separate brigades (including 15 tank brigades), 9 fortified areas and 5 separate tank regiments. In total, this strategic grouping of Soviet troops included 66 rifle and 8 cavalry divisions, 198 artillery and mortar regiments (including 129 artillery and mortar regiments of the RVGK). Taking into account separate rifle and motorized rifle brigades, the number of calculated divisions reached 74.5.

Having assessed the state of its troops and the enemy, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command developed a plan for a counteroffensive operation. The main idea of the counteroffensive, which was planned as a single strategic operation of a group of fronts, was the two-sided envelopment of the enemy's Stalingrad grouping with its subsequent encirclement and destruction. Since the bulk of the enemy troops were located linearly, and besides, in one more shallow zone of the tactical defense zone, it was decided to defeat them in it with the help of a quick and powerful blow before the enemy was able to release forces from other sectors of the front.

The counteroffensive operation was favored by the configuration of the front line, which was advantageous for the Soviet side, when the position of the enemy made it possible to strike on the flanks and in the rear of his main grouping. It was supposed to first break through the defenses on the flanks, northwest and south of Stalingrad, and then build on the success of mobile formations, leading the offensive in converging directions to Kalach. Active hostilities were planned simultaneously in a strip of up to 400 km. The strike groupings, which were assigned the main role in encircling the enemy, were to cover a distance of 110-140 km from the north and up to 90 km from the south, and then, uniting in the Kalach, Sovetsky area, create two fronts of encirclement - external and internal. Auxiliary strikes were planned from the bridgehead near Kletskaya and from the Kachalinskaya area in the general direction to Vertyachiy in order to cut off the German troops operating in the small bend of the Don (TsAMO).

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F. 19a, op. 2045, d. 7, l. 4657; There. F. 3, op. 11 556, d. 10, l. 339; There. F. 229, op. 590, d. 2, l. 29).

Undoubtedly, the plan of operation was distinguished by both boldness of design and strategic scope. But for its successful implementation, one advantage in terms of forces and means, as the experience of past battles and operations testified, was clearly not enough. Especially if we take into account that most of the personnel of the units and formations, mainly from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, had little or no combat experience at all. However, in those formations that have already taken part in the battles, up to 60%

constituted a newly arrived replenishment. In this regard, the result of the operation largely depended not only on the skill of command, but also on the thorough combat and moral and psychological preparation of the personnel.

On November 13, the plan for the counteroffensive at Stalingrad was approved by the Supreme Commander. Since the initial deadlines for the transition to the counteroffensive (November 9-10) could not be met due to the incompleteness of the preparatory measures, on November 15, J. Stalin instructed G.K. Zhukov and A.M. Vasilevsky to determine them on the spot at his own discretion. They determined the beginning of the operation for the Southwestern and Don Fronts - November 19, for the Stalingrad Front - November 20. The difference in the timing of the transition to the offensive was explained by the difference in the depth of the tasks of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts, the shock groups of which were supposed to simultaneously reach the Kalach and Sovetsky regions (Stalingrad epic. - M.: Nauka, 1969. - P. 88).

In accordance with the operation plan, the Southwestern Front was to deliver the main blow from the bridgeheads in the Serafimovich and Kletskaya areas, with the forces of two armies (5th Panzer and 21st) to break through the enemy's defenses, once. crush the right-flank formations of the 3rd Romanian army and, developing the offensive in a southeast direction, by the end of the third day, reach the Kalach and Sovetsky area, where they will join up with the troops of Stalingradsky

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front, inflicting a counter blow. In order to provide the shock grouping of the front from the west, the 1st Guards Army was to part of its forces at the same time strike in a southwestern direction, reach the line of the Krivaya and Chir rivers and create an external encirclement front there. Cover and air support for the troops of the Southwestern Front were assigned to the 17th and 2nd air armies. In addition, it was planned to use long-range aviation here.

The Stalingrad Front was tasked with delivering the main blow from the Sarpinsky Lakes region with the forces of three armies (51st, 57th, 64th), breaking through the defenses of the Romanian 6th Army Corps and defeating it. Then, developing an offensive to the northwest in the general direction of Sovetsky, by the end of the second day of the operation, join here with the troops of the Southwestern Front and complete the encirclement of the Stalingrad enemy grouping. In order to ensure the operations of the strike force from the southwest, the front received an order with part of the forces to advance in the direction of Abganerovo, Kotelnikovo in order to create an external encirclement front. Air cover and support for the strike force of the Stalingrad Front was assigned to the 8th Air Army.

The Don Front was to strike from the bridgehead in the area of Kletskaya by the forces of the 65th Army and from the area of Kachalinskaya - along the left bank of the Don - by the 24th Army in converging directions to Vertyachy with the task of encircling and destroying the enemy grouping defending in a small bend Don. The troops of the front were supported by the 16th Air Army.

The decisions taken by the commanders of the fronts corresponded to the tasks set by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. However, the situation that had developed by that time forced them to make some changes to the originally planned directions of the main attacks, to clarify the areas of breakthrough and the composition of the strike groupings of the armies. Taking into account intelligence data on the state of enemy defenses, the operational formation of fronts was one echelon, and the allocated reserves were insignificant.

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mi. In their decisions, the commanders of the troops of the fronts placed the main emphasis on the high rate of penetration of the enemy's defenses and the development of a swift offensive in its operational depth. To this end, the forces and means were massed in the directions of the main attacks, the armies were given almost all mobile formations and the bulk of the artillery of the RVGK for reinforcement, the breakthrough sites were assigned narrow and were removed from each other by 15-20 km.

Thanks to the careful preparation of the operation and good camouflage, the Soviet command managed to achieve strategic surprise and carry out a decisive massing of forces and means in the directions of the main attacks of the fronts. In the areas of penetration of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts, which accounted for 9% of the total length of the front line, 50% and 66% of rifle divisions, respectively, 85% of reinforcement artillery, 100% of guards mortar units, all tank and cavalry corps were concentrated. As a result, with the overall advantage of Army Group "B" in forces and means, superiority over the enemy was created in areas of breakthrough fronts: in people - 2-2.5 times, in artillery and tanks - 3-5 times or more. .

The operational formation of the armies was in two echelons, only the 51st and 57th armies of the Stalingrad Front had a formation in one echelon. In five of the seven armies, mobile groups were created, consisting of two tank and cavalry corps. Long-range artillery groups, anti-aircraft artillery groups and groups of guards mortar units were created in all the armies that were part of the shock groupings of the fronts. On the whole, the operational formation of the armies provided not only a powerful initial blow, but also the possibility of building up efforts during the offensive.

For the first time, it was planned to use artillery and aviation on a large scale, moreover in the form of an artillery and aviation offensive. The artillery offensive was to be carried out in three periods: artillery preparation for an attack, artillery

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sky support for the attack and artillery escort of the battle of infantry and tanks in depth. Artillery preparation on the Southwestern and Don fronts was planned to last 80 minutes, on the Stalingrad front - from 40 to 75 minutes. The density of artillery in the breakthrough areas reached 70 or more guns and mortars per 1 km front. The highest density (taking into account the installations of rocket artillery) was created in the 5th tank army - 117 guns and mortars. In the offensive zones of the armies of the Stalingrad Front, artillery densities were much lower - 40-50 units per 1 km of the front. The air offensive assumed direct air preparation and air support for the ground troops offensive (Military Historical Journal, 1972. No. 11. - P. 37).

The peculiarity of the planning of the combat use of tank troops was that their bulk was used in the directions of the main attacks of the front as part of mobile army groups. Part of the tanks were allocated for direct support of the infantry (NP), in this capacity, separate tank battalions, regiments and brigades were used, and they were used centrally in the offensive zone of a rifle division. Although the density of NI tanks here increased 1.3-2.2 times compared to the counteroffensive near Moscow, this was still not enough to break through the enemy defenses in a short time. Therefore, in a number of cases, it was envisaged to reinforce rifle divisions with tanks at the expense of army mobile groups. When organizing air defense, up to 74% of the anti-aircraft weapons of the fronts were concentrated in the directions of the main attacks, which made it possible to reach a density of 13.2 anti-aircraft guns per 1 km of the front in the breakthrough areas (Military-Historical Journal, 1968. No. 3. - P. 67).

In preparing the counteroffensive, much attention was paid to the engineering and logistical support of the operation, operational camouflage, the organization of interaction, especially between the branches of the armed forces, and the creation of a stable command and control system in all

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links. Regroupings of troops were carried out with the aim of creating strike groups in the fronts and armies. Reconnaissance in force was carried out in all armies. K. top

November South-Western, Stalingrad and Don fronts completed the development of plans for offensive operations. Before the start of their implementation - the start of the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops near Stalingrad - there were only a few days left.

An important problem in the preparation of the forthcoming counter-offensive was to ensure the secrecy of this preparation and to mislead the enemy. The organization of preparations for the counteroffensive was carried out in the strictest secrecy. Any correspondence concerning the forthcoming counter-offensive, even encrypted, was strictly forbidden. All orders and instructions were given to the performers only verbally. Radio stations worked only for reception.

The headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command sought to give the enemy the impression that a major offensive of the Red Army was being prepared on the central sector of the Soviet-German front, and not on the southern one. This was facilitated by the concentration near Moscow of up to 30% of all rifle, tank, mechanized and cavalry formations, the formation of strategic reserves east of Moscow. Private offensive operations were carried out in the areas of the cities of Velikie Luki, Rzhev, Sychevka.

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Operational summary for November 28

At the last hour

NEW IMPACT ON THE ENEMY

THE OFFENSIVE OF OUR TROOPS ON TEN  
MINING FRONT

The other day, our troops went on the offensive in the area east of the town of VELIKIE LUKI and in the area west of the town of Rzhev. Overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, our troops broke through the heavily fortified defensive line of the enemy. In the area of the city of VELIKIE LUKI, the German front was broken through for 30 km. In the area west of

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Rzhev the enemy front was broken through in three places: in one place with a length of 20 km, in another sector with a length of 17 km and in a third sector with a length of up to 10 km. In all the directions indicated, our troops advanced in depth from 12 to 30 km.

Therefore, the Hitlerite command began a large concentration of its troops in the zones of the Soviet western fronts. To the Velikiye Luki region from near Leningrad



tank, motorized and infantry divisions were transferred. Seven divisions from France and Germany were sent to the Vitebsk-Smolensk region. In the area of Yartsevo and Roslavl - two tank divisions from near Voronezh and Zhizdra. In total, by the beginning of November, twelve divisions were deployed to reinforce Army Group Center, not counting other means of reinforcement.

In the Stalingrad direction, the concentration of Soviet troops and the creation of strike groups in the open steppe area was carried out only at night and in inclement weather, with observance of camouflage measures. Troop disposition areas, communications, crossings were reliably covered by fighter aircraft and air defense systems.

## CREATING THE OUTSIDE FRONT

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

At the last hour

SUCCESSFUL OFFENSIVE OF OUR TROOPS IN THE REGION of  
the mountains. STALINGRAD

The other day our troops stationed on the outskirts of Stalingrad went over to the offensive against the Nazi troops. The offensive began in two directions: from the northwest and from the south of Stalingrad. Having broken through the enemy's defensive line 30 kilometers long in the northwest (in the Serafimovich region), and 20 kilometers south of Stalingrad, our troops advanced 60-70 kilometers in three days of intense fighting, overcoming enemy resistance.

Mountains are occupied by our troops. KALACH on the east bank of the Don, station KRIVOMUZGINSKAYA (Sovetsk), station and town of ABGANEROVO.

In battle, the troops of Lieutenant General Comrade RO MANENKO, Major General Comrade Chistyakov, Major General Comrade TOLBUKHIN, Major General Comrade GRUFANOV, Lieutenant General Comrade BATOV distinguished themselves in battle.

The counteroffensive of the troops of the Southwestern Front began at 07:30 on November 19, 1942 with artillery preparation that lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes. Due to continuous fog (visibility range did not exceed 300-400 m) and snowfall, it was carried out on unobservable targets, according to previously prepared data. Aviation could operate only in small groups, and part of its tasks to suppress the enemy had to be

put on artillery. Still, the fire proved to be quite effective. A particularly important role was played by guns deployed for direct fire, which fired at visible targets on the front line of enemy defenses.

At 0850 hours, when the artillery shifted its fire into the depths, the infantry and tanks of the NPP of the 5th Tank (commanded by Major General P.L. Romanenko) and the 21st (commanded by Major General I.M. Chistyakov) armies attacked the front line of the enemy. The Romanians managed to capture the first trench almost without resistance, but in a number of sectors the enemy met the attackers with strong rifle and machine-gun fire. Another thing soon became clear: due to poor visibility, far from all Romanian batteries were suppressed by artillery (Artillery in offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War. - M.: Voenizdat. - Book 2. 1965. - P. 172).

It was necessary to urgently suppress the firing points that interfered with the advance of the infantry. The commanders of regiments and divisions put forward part of the guns for direct fire from closed firing positions, but this did not increase the pace of the offensive: in three hours of battle, only two rifle divisions (47th Guards of the 5th Tank Army and 293rd of the 21st Army ) advanced to a depth of 2-3 km, having mastered the first position of the Romanians. Other formations, having met with strong resistance from the enemy, were not successful. Only repeated attacks of strongholds over the course of three hours made it possible to complete the breakthrough of the first position by 13 o'clock. Thus, the advance of troops in 4-5 hours amounted to 3-4 km. The rifle divisions reached the second position of the enemy defense by 2 p.m.

Commander of the Southwestern Front, Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin decided to bring tank corps into battle. He ordered the commanders of the 5th Panzer and 21st Armies to use their mobile groups to complete the breakthrough of the enemy defenses (TsAMO. F. 232, op. 590. d. 17, l. 30; Ivanov S.P. Army Headquarters, front-line headquarters. - M.: Voenizdat. 1990. - S. 461).

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The tank corps of the 5th Panzer Army began to advance to the line of deployment as early as 9 o'clock in the morning. But all the routes were so clogged with artillery and the rear of the advancing troops that only by 2 p.m. did the 1st tank corps of General V.V. Butkova managed to advance to the combat formations of the infantry and join the battle. Having broken the enemy's stubborn resistance, the corps advanced another 4 km in depth, but soon ran into a strong enemy resistance center near the Klinovaya farm, defended by a Romanian infantry battalion with two artillery regiments. The corps commander ordered

with the help of forces to pin down the enemy from the front, and with the main forces to strike at the flank. At the same time, the 157th Tank Brigade of the 26th Tank Corps reached Klinovoe. One temporary attack by the forces of four tank brigades was so unexpected for the enemy that some of the guns did not have time to fire a single shot and were crushed.

The battle in this direction ended with the complete defeat of two regiments of the 14th Romanian infantry division, whose personnel, having lost communication and control, began to surrender in groups. Using the success of the tanks, by 4 pm the 47th Guards and 119th Rifle Divisions completed the immediate task. The tactical defense of the 3rd Romanian army in this area was broken through.

The breakthrough of the second lane and the entire tactical defense zone of the enemy in the offensive zone of the 124th rifle division with the 26th tank corps of General A. G. Rodin was completed only by the end of the day. The same result was achieved by the 14th Guards Rifle Division on the right flank of the army.

After breaking through the enemy's tactical defense zone, the most advanced formations of the 5th Panzer Army were stopped by the operational reserves of Army Group B: the 1st Panzer Corps by units of the 22nd German Panzer Division in the area north of Ust-Med Veditzky, and the 124th I am a rifle division of the | th Romanian tank division in the Perelazovsky area. Promotion

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The distance of the 1st Tank Corps was 20 km, of the 26th Tank Corps - up to 40 km.

The remaining formations of the first echelon of the 5th Panzer Army continued to break through the first line of defense against tivnik.

Throughout November 20, the troops of the 5th Panzer Army continued fighting with the enemy troops, trying to build on the success achieved and completing the breakthrough of the enemy defenses on the rest of the offensive front. In the afternoon, the army commander took measures to replace tank formations with cavalry and rifle divisions. It was decided to withdraw the tank corps from the battle and prepare them for the solution of the main task - the completion of the encirclement of the enemy's Stalingrad group.

With access to the operational space, the 26th Tank Corps of the 5th Tank Army and the 4th Tank Corps of the Don Front (corps commander Major General A.G. -

front. To capture the crossing over the river. Don from the 26th tank corps was allocated an advance detachment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel G.N. Filippova. With a bold raid on the night of November 23, the detachment captured the bridge, ensuring the rapid crossing of the advancing tankers and the liberation of the city of Kalach by them. On November 23, the troops of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts united in the area of this city, closing the ring of encirclement of the Stalingrad group of Nazi troops.

In order to break the stubborn resistance of the enemy on the right flank of the 5th Panzer Army, Army Commander General P.L. Romanenko decided to bring his second echelon into battle - the 159th Infantry Division. The 14th Guards Rifle Division, which was operating there, was reinforced by a tank brigade, as well as five artillery and mortar regiments. 8th Cavalry Corps of General M.D. Borisov, the task was to deliver a blow to Gorbatovsky with one division, i.e. in the rear of the enemy grouping operating in front of the right flank of the 5th

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tank army, and the main forces by the end of the day to leave kr. Chir near the village of Chernyshevskaya.

During the day of November 21, the enemy's resistance on the right wing of the Southwestern Front was finally broken. His troops broke through the enemy defenses and, advancing 25 km in depth, by the end of the day they came out kr. Curve, thus reliably securing the right flank of the front's strike force (TsAMO. F. 229, op. 645, d. 3, l. 19).

November 23, Monday

FROM THE SOVIET INFORMBUREAU

Evening message

During November 23, our troops continued to conduct a successful offensive from the north-west and from the south of the city of Stalingrad in the same directions.

Our troops occupied the city of Chernyshevskaya, the city of Perelazovsky, the town of Pogodinsky, the city of Tundutovo and the city of Aksai.

In the second half of November 22, the 47th Guards Rifle Division was the first in the army to leave kr. Chir and overran the village of Chernyshevskaya (TsAMO. F. 232, op. 590, d. 17, l. 45). Even further south - in the Ust-Gryaznovsky region - on the Chir River, the 8th cavalry corps advanced, and in the Oblivskaya region - the 8th motorcycle regiment.

At the end of November, in the Bokovskaya area, non-

how many attacks of the German 29th army corps, transferred from the defense zone of the 8th Italian army.

The left-flank divisions of the 1st Guards Army from November 19 to 23 fought stubborn battles in order to expand the breakthrough of the Southwestern Front towards the right flank and advanced to the upper reaches of the Krivaya River.

Thus, the outer front of the encirclement was created in the zone of the South-Western Front. Troops of the 1st Guards Army and part of the forces (14th Guards, 47th Guards, 119th, 124th Rifle Divisions, 8th Cavalry Corps, 8th

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motorcycle regiment, 1st tank corps) of the 5th tank armies.

The offensive of the troops of the Stalingrad Front also began in adverse weather conditions. It was decided to begin artillery preparation in each army as soon as the necessary conditions for this were created. It was necessary to abandon its simultaneous conduct on the scale of the front, however, in the same way as the aviation training. The artillery of the 57th Army was the first to open fire at 09:15. After 15 minutes, she spoke in the band of the 51st Army. Limited visibility made it necessary to fire at unobservable targets, with the exception of those guns that were allocated for direct fire. Nevertheless, the enemy's fire system was basically broken. Then formations of the 51st (Major General N.I. Trufanov) and 57th (Major General F.I. Tolbukhin) armies went on the offensive. Having broken through the defenses of the 4th Romanian army and repulsed numerous counterattacks, they began to develop success in the western direction. By the middle of the day, conditions were created for bringing army mobile groups into the breakthrough.

The offensive of the troops of the Stalingrad Front after breaking through the defense of the Romanian troops and bringing the 4th, 13th mechanized and 4th cavalry corps into the breakthrough was provided from the south by the 51st army. This army, having transferred the 15th Guards Rifle Division and the 4th Mechanized Corps to the 57th Army, developed the offensive in a southwestern direction with the help of three rifle divisions and the 4th Cavalry Corps.

November 24, Tuesday

FROM THE SOVIET INFORMBUREAU

Evening message

During November 24, our troops continued to conduct

a foot offensive from the northwest and from the south of Stalingrad and in the same directions.

Our troops occupied the city and the station of Surovikino, nase

thirty

the fixed points of Zimovsky, Kamyshinka, Near Perekonka, Trekhostrovskaya, Sirotinskaya, Tomilin, Akatovka, Latoshinka, Umantsevo, Peregruzny and the town of Sadovoye.

Destroying and pushing back the Romanian units, the 4th cavalry corps advanced to the Abganerovo region on the night of November 21 and by the end of November 23 - to the line of Aksai, Umantsevo. Directly behind the corps, as well as to the left of it in the direction of Sadovoye, the rifle divisions of the 51st Army advanced.

In this way, the troops of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts created an outer encirclement front.

By the evening of November 23, there was still no complete encirclement front. Its total length was more than 450 km, of which 265 km were actually covered by the advancing troops, and the minimum distance of the outer front from the inner one in the most critical directions did not exceed 15-20 km. But the enemy did not have a solid line of defense either. It was necessary to create in the near future a solid and durable external front, moving it away from the internal one. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to continue the offensive, concentrating sufficiently strong reserves of riflemen and mobile troops on the outer front and behind it.

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Evening message 24 November

#### THE OFFENSIVE OF OUR TROOPS CONTINUES

During November 24, our troops near Stalingrad continued to develop the offensive.

To the south of Stalingrad, our troops advanced 15-20 kilometers and occupied the city and station of Surovikino, the settlements of Zimovsky, Kamyshinka, Blizhnaya Perekopka, Trekhostrovskaya, Sirotinskaya, Tomilin, Akatovka, Latoshanka, Umantsevo, Peregruzny and the city of Sadovoye.

During November 24, our troops continued to conduct a successful offensive from the northwest and from the south of the mountains. Stalingrada in the former directions.

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From November 25 on the river. Chir, stubborn battles unfolded with enemy reserves that had reached here. With varying success, they continued until the very beginning of December. Attaching great importance to strengthening the outer front of the encirclement on the river. Chir, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command took all measures to strengthen the 5th Panzer Army. By this time, it was operating on a broad front - up to 170 km and along diverging directions. Four rifle divisions and a cavalry corps were sent to the army. By November 23, it already included nine rifle divisions, a tank and two cavalry corps.

From the side of the Stalingrad Front, the troops of the newly created 5th shock and 51st armies participated. At the beginning of December, they reached the approaches to Kotelnikov. They were faced with the task of liberating this settlement, and then, having entrenched themselves on the reached line, reliably covering the main forces of the front from the southwest, which were operating against the encircled enemy.

November 28, Saturday

FROM THE SOVIET INFORMBUREAU

Evening message

During November 25, our troops in the region of Stalingrad, overcoming enemy resistance, continued the offensive in the same directions.

Our troops occupied the settlements of Akimovsky, Nizhne-Gnilovsky, Kisloe, Logovsky, Yeritsky, Chilekov, Shestakov, Antonov, Romashkin, Kruglyakov, Nebykov, Samokhin, Zhutov 2nd, Nizhny and Verkhny Yablochny, and the Chilekovo station.

By November 30, the outer front of the encirclement with a length of more than 500 km began to be occupied by the troops of the 1st Guards and 5th Tank Armies of the Southwestern Front and the troops of the 4th Cavalry Corps, rifle divisions of the 51st Army of the Stalingrad Front. It passed along the eastern bank of the river Krivaya, Bokovskaya (at the confluence of the river. Kriva v. Chir), along the river Chir to its confluence with the Don,

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further along the railway line at the Oblivskaya, Surovikino, Rychkovsky section, along the river. Don (where from Nizhne-Chirskaya to Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya 50 km is not occupied by troops), Pokhlebino, Verkhne-Yablochny, Gremyachiy (to the north of Kotelnikovo), Pimen-Cherny, Kanukovo, Abundant, Umantsevo, Aksai, Ketchenery, the northern shore of the lake Sarpa

(southern).

The outer front of the encirclement was at a distance of 40-140 km from the inner front of the encirclement.

Having no free reserves nearby, the Soviet command was forced to reinforce the outer front of the encirclement, primarily its southwestern and southern directions, at the expense of the inner front of the encirclement. In the last days of November, for this purpose, part of the rifle divisions from the 65th and 21st armies of the Don Front were transferred to the Tormosinsky direction, and the divisions of the 51st Army, which had remained until that time on the internal front, were transferred to the southern front of the external front. , that is, to the Kotelnikovskoe direction.

At the same time, taking into account the rather favorable situation on the middle reaches of the Don, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command found it expedient to conduct an additional operation with the forces of the Southwestern and left wing of the Voronezh fronts in order to expand the front of the offensive and strike at the enemy in the general direction of Millerovo, Rostov. It was assumed that the success of this operation could create conditions for the complete defeat of the enemy grouping on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front and, at the same time, more reliably ensure the liquidation of the grouping encircled in Stalingrad from the west and southwest. The idea of the Soviet command was to hold back the offensive of the main enemy grouping by the forces of the Stalingrad Front, to defeat the troops encircled in Stalingrad, at the same time to prepare and conduct a major offensive operation on the Middle Don with the aim of finally defeating the Don Army Group and reaching the rear of the Caucasian enemy grouping (the operation received the code name "Saturn").

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For the convenience of command and control of the troops of the Southwestern Front, which took part in two operations, it was decided to divide the 1st Guards Army into two parts. The formations planned to participate in Operation Saturn should be left as part of this army, appointing Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov, and from the rest of the formations operating at the turn of the Don, Krivaya and Chir rivers to Chernyshevskaya, create a new, 3rd Guards Army, led by Lieutenant General D.D. Lelyushenko.

The Hitlerite command also experienced an acute need for reserves in order to rectify the catastrophic situation of their troops in the Stalingrad and Caucasian directions with their help. In order to prevent the transfer of reserves from Army Group Center, the Stavka decided, simultaneously with the counteroffensive in the Stalingrad region, to organize



the offensive of the troops of the Kalinin and Western fronts against the Nazi troops occupying the Rzhev-Vyazma ledge. By December 8, preparations for the offensive were completed. The operation that began did not achieve its main goal - the elimination of the Rzhev salient, but the active actions of the Soviet troops did not allow the German command to transfer significant reinforcements from this sector to the Stalingrad region. Moreover, in order to retain the Rzhev-Vyazma salient, it was forced to transfer four tank and one motorized divisions to this area.

For the German command, the defeat in the area of Stalingrad threatened to grow into a catastrophe on a large strategic scale. Therefore, in order to stabilize the front of defense of its troops in the Stalingrad direction, deblockade its grouping surrounded by Stalingrad and withdraw Army Group A from the Caucasus and thus restore a continuous front, it decided to concentrate fresh forces in the areas of Tormosin and Kotelnikov and in the first turn with strikes in the direction of Stalingrad to break through the encirclement around the 6th and part of the forces of the 4th tank armies. To address these

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tasks, the Don army group was created, which included all the troops operating south of the middle reaches of the Don to the Astrakhan steppes, as well as the grouping surrounded by Stalingrad. Field Marshal E. Manstein was appointed commander.

The main strike force in the Don army group in the Kotelnikov area was the Goth army group, which included the 4th Panzer Army (commanded by Colonel General Goth). The army group also included the remnants of German troops thrown back to the lower reaches of the Chir River (south of Surovikino) and to the Don between Nizhne-Chirskaya and Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, as well as the 4th Romanian an army of four infantry and two cavalry divisions.

North-west of the army group "Got" along the Chir River to the area south of Chernyshevsky, consolidated groups formed from the remnants of Nazi units with a strength of up to two infantry divisions, united by the command of the 3rd Romanian army, defended. To the north of them, up to Veshenskaya, the Hollidt task force, which arrived from the zone of the 8th Italian army, was defending.

The command of Army Group "Don" planned to carry two strikes. The main blow by the forces of the Goth army group from the Kotelnikovo region to Stalingrad and the second blow by part of the forces of the Hollidt group from the bridgeheads on the Don and Chir rivers in the Rychkovsky region also to Stalingrad.

The creation of an enemy strike force in the region of the Nizhniy Chir River and on the bridgehead in the Rychkovsky region was thwarted by the actions of the 5th shock army being created (commanded by Lieutenant General M.M. Popov). This army was formed in early December mainly from units of the 10th Reserve Army. Then part of the forces of the 5th Panzer Army of the Southwestern Front and some formations of the Stalingrad Front were transferred to it. It began to include the 4th Guards, 258th, 300th, 315th, 87th Rifle Divisions and the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps.

Troops of the 5th shock army, reinforced by the 7th tank

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corps (corps commander, Major General of the Tank Troops P.A. Rotmistrov), on the morning of December 13, battles began to destroy the enemy in the bridgehead. By the end of December 15, the bridgehead in the Rychkovsky area was completely cleared.

The struggle for a bridgehead is of particular interest from the point of view of a non-standard solution to the combat mission obtained. Even before the troops of the 5th Shock Army received the mission, the bridgehead was repeatedly cleared of the enemy by units of the 258th and 4th Guards Rifle Divisions of the 5th Tank Army. Attacks were made from the flank under the base of the bridgehead both day and night, but did not bring the expected result. According to reconnaissance data, the enemy improved his defense more and more, especially on the flanks. The strike force had to be reinforced with tanks. This was done by the front command, which transferred the 7th tank corps to the 5th shock army.

The commander of the tank corps proposed to strike with a powerful tank group directly from the front without artillery preparation. The main blow before dawn was to be delivered by the 3rd heavy tank brigade (brigade commander, Major General of Tank Forces I.A. Vovchenko). Riflemen and cavalymen were to support the offensive only after success was achieved by the tankers. The offensive went according to plan, and the enemy was thrown from the bridgehead he had captured.

Active operations of the 1st Panzer, 5th Mechanized and 8th Cavalry Corps in the area of Oblivskaya, Surovikino, Secretev forced the enemy 11th Panzer and 336th Infantry Divisions to go on the defensive in this area as well. An attempt by the German command to break through to the group encircled in Stalingrad from the bridgehead in the Rychkovsky area was thwarted.

Therefore, the enemy command was forced

to make a decision on inflicting one blow by the forces of the army group "Goth" only.

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#### SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER 1942

By the beginning of December the situation on the fronts was as follows. The inner front of the encirclement passed along the Rynok line, heights 122.9, 126.7, Marinovka, Rakotino, Tsybenko, Elkhi, Kuporosnoye; in the northern part of the city, the front line went through the quarters adjacent to the banks of the Volga. The outer front, formed by the troops of the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts, went from Rubezhinskoye along the rivers Krivaya, Chir, then along the Don to the village of Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, and from it to Verkhne-Yablochny, Gremyachaya, Darganov, Nugra. Between the encircled enemy divisions and our outer front there was a strip about 40 kilometers wide at its narrowest point.

The fact that by the beginning of December the encircled enemy troops had almost no transport links with the outside world, with the exception of air, did not force either the Hitlerite headquarters or the command of the encircled troops to soberly weigh the situation and the real balance of forces. They still expected to retain the Stalingrad bridgehead, occupied by the troops of the 6th Army and part of the forces of the 4th Panzer Army (then reduced to one - the 6th Army), hoping that contact with them would be restored by simultaneous strikes from outside and from within. on one of the sections of the ring of our troops. By retaining this foothold, Hitler intended to reserve the opportunity for a further offensive in a southerly direction, in order to finally carry out his plans for mastering the Caucasus. Often this decision of Hitler is regarded as a whim of a maniac, but this, of course, is not entirely true: it is necessary

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keep in mind that the events unfolding near Stalingrad had no precedent in world military history, so the fascist Fuhrer did not believe in his defeat at the walls of the city, which was almost 50% in his hands. Not enough of this. Hitler's decision, as you know, was supported by the majority of the German generals, although now Hitler's surviving minions deny this by all means, blaming everything on the Fuhrer.

It should be noted that the events near Stalingrad at that moment were also considered by quite authoritative people in military and political affairs as bordering on something supernatural. For example, Win

Groaning Churchill, in his speech on the radio on November 29, 1942, said: "Successes in Africa, no matter how quick and decisive they may be, should not divert our attention from the blows that the Russians inflict on the eastern front and which border on a miracle. The whole world comes to admiration at the thought of the gigantic power that Russia was able to preserve and use.

Immediately after our breakthrough, the enemy defenses on the flanks began to spread. Taken by surprise, the enemy troops often fled so much that they even lost contact with the attackers. Fearing that this withdrawal, which turned into a stampede in some areas, would lead to the loss of the most advantageous lines for defense, the Nazis began to feverishly create defenses along the line of the Chir River (the left tributary of the Don); they assumed that it was in this direction that our blows would develop after the capture of Kalach. The enemy did not have free reserves in this area, and he was forced to enlist the first units, subunits, teams, etc., that came to hand to create a defense here. (Here, the defeated units of the 3rd Romanian Army, the 48th Panzer Corps, created anew shortly before our counteroffensive and immediately badly battered, as well as various training and rear units of the 6th Army, which were not surrounded ).

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Intelligence information from the Southwestern Front, due to a number of circumstances, including really objective ones, could not give a complete picture in this area. According to her, there was a whole grouping here, the so-called "Tormosinskaya group"; these small troops, whose task it was to stabilize the situation in front of their own front, were assigned from the very beginning other goals, namely, a counterattack with the aim of freeing the encircled.

G. Derr's book contains a considerable amount of truth in this respect. He writes in particular:

"Organization of defense on the river. Chir before we began to blunt in order to release the encircled troops (from November 24 to December 11, 1942).

It was fortunate for us that the Russians, after carrying out the operation against the 6th Army, took a breather to strengthen the encirclement front. This made it possible for the non-German command (Army Group B) to stop the retreat and place it at the turn of the river. Chir 3rd Romanian army, a significant part of which has already crossed the river. Chir in its upper reaches to the west. The backbone of this defensive position consisted of German battle groups, which were formed partly on the initiative of the formation commanders, partly on the orders of the group

armies "B" already starting from November 19. They were hastily created, including every last soldier: from consolidated companies, headquarters, commandant's offices, rear service units, vacation teams, construction units, air force ground staff, railway workers, i.e. from any units that had numbers field mail and located in the rear area of the 6th army. For the most part, there were people who, in terms of combat training, equipment and weapons, were not prepared to act as infantrymen in the then exceptionally difficult situation ...

The balanced, self-possessed commander of the 3rd Romanian Army managed to take control of the army into his own hands again. Under his command (he was placed at the head of his headquarters from the German

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on the side of Colonel of the General Staff Venk) at the line of Chir station, a bridgehead in this area, Dmitrievka station, Surovikino, Oblivskaya, Varlamov, defense was organized. Initially, it was planned to equip it to the north of the Morozovsk-Stalingrad road, along which the army was supplied, but this plan was successful.

fulfill only partially.

The headquarters of the battle groups were subordinate to the headquarters of the 3rd Romanian army.

The so-called "Stumpfelfeld group" (chief of artillery of the 108th division) occupied the right flank up to Oblivskaya (inclusive); The "Shpanga group" (the head of the nickname of the rear area of the front) occupied the left flank to Varlamov.

Further north, our troops managed to stabilize the situation and again take the line along the river. Chir. On November 24, the 17th Army Corps, which arrived in the Nizhny Astakhov region, pushed the enemy back west of the river. Chir in its upper reaches to the east, occupied a bridgehead in the Bokovskaya area, advanced along the valley of the river. Curve to the north and captured Dubovsky. During the following days, he took up defensive positions on the Chir and Krivaya rivers. From Dubovsky, the front line retreated back to the northwest, where in the Tokin area, 40 km northwest of Bokovskaya, there was a poorly secured junction with the 8th Italian Army on the Don. On November 26, the remnants of the 48th Panzer Corps, nailed from the encirclement in the Chernyshevskaya area, joined the defense on the river. Chir, occupying a strip on both sides of the Chir settlement between the 3rd Romanian army and the 17th army corps.

After the Shtakhel group (8th air corps) was brought up from the rear on November 30, which occupied the strip between the Stumpfelfeld group and the Shpang group in the area of \u200b\u200bSekretev station, Karaichev, it could be considered

that the situation in the big bend of the Don was stabilized. Between the western flank of the Gota army group at the mouth of the Aksai north of Potemkinskaya and the bridgehead in the Verkhne-Chirskaya defense on the western bank of the Don, the "group of

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Adam" (later "Abraham's group"), which was also entrusted with the defense of the bridgehead.

On November 26, the enemy resumed his operations on the flanks of the 6th Army. His first and never-ending attacks were aimed at capturing a bridgehead behind the Don, which at the end of the month was narrowed as a result of enemy actions. At the same time, he conducted reconnaissance in combat on the front of the 3rd Romanian Army and went on the offensive in several sectors. On November 29, he broke through the defenses east of Surovikino, reached the southern bank of the Chir River and captured Ostrovsky.

#### FIGHTS ON THE EXTERNAL FRONT (DECEMBER 3-12)

Meanwhile, on the outer front of the encirclement, the troops of the 5th Panzer Army struck the enemy on the morning of December 2 and, as a result of fierce fighting, captured the bridgehead on the river. Chir near Nizhne-Kalinovka.

In the following days, December 3-6, units of the 5th Panzer Army repelled counterattacks by units of the 336th Infantry, 11th Panzer, and 7th Airfield Divisions of the enemy.

On December 7, the 5th Panzer Army resumed the offensive, crossed the river. Chir, and by 4 p.m. the troops of its left flank captured Ostrovsky, Lisinsky and state farm No. 70. However, with a meeting engagement in the Surovikino, Ostrovsky, Lisinsky sector, the enemy managed to stop the advance of the Soviet troops. In the following days, the Germans, with strong counterattacks, forced the formations of the 5th Panzer Army to withdraw to their original line.

Despite the fact that the enemy held the bridgehead on the left bank of the Don at Nizhne-Chirskaya, as well as the parade ground of the darma on the left beret of the river. Chir in the area of Rychkovsky and Verkhne-Chirsky, the active operations of the 5th Panzer Army in the first ten days of December played a positive role. The enemy exhausted his forces here and lost the ability to participate in the planned offensive with the aim of releasing the encircled grouping. The actions of the Soviet artillery and aviation played a significant role in delivering blows to the enemy and repelling his counterattacks. Front-line aviation not only supported ground troops, but also bombed enemy airfields in the areas of Tatsinskaya and Morozovsk and the railroad in the Morozovsk-Likhaya section.

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Thus, by the beginning of the second decade of December, the troops of the Soviet fronts operating in the area of Stalingrad continued to deploy combat operations on the internal and external fronts of the encirclement.

The 5th shock, 51st and 28th armies operated on the outer front with a total length of 365 km (to Elista and Astrakhan). The command of the Stalingrad Front, in order to strengthen its troops in the Kotelnikovsky direction, transferred there from the left bank of the Volga from its reserve the 300th and 87th rifle divisions, which by the morning of December 12 went out as advanced units to the areas of Buzinovka, Zeta, Verkhne-Tsaritsynskaya . And the 315th rifle division was concentrated in the area of the Krep state farm, and in the Vypasnaya area - the 235th flamethrower tank brigade, the 234th separate tank regiment and the 20th fighter brigade. To reinforce the troops on the external front, the 4th mechanized and 13th tank corps were sent here from the internal front.

The table compiled on the basis of the work "The Great Victory on the Volga" gives an idea of how the forces and means of the Stalingrad Front were distributed,

With. 369.

Internal Backup

AND IN

ISI [yell out | 168 | No. [5

PT guns 1179 min.  
(from 82 mm) 2175 1074

\*Including the 28th Army.

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From the given data it can be seen that the tanks were concentrated mainly on the outer front, and the rest of the ground forces were distributed mainly

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evenly between inner and outer fronts approx.

ruzheniya.

On the outer front, the highest density was

troops of the 5th shock army, opposing the enemy grouping in the Nizhne-Chirskaya area. Occupying the defense at the front up to 95 km, the army consisted of 71 thousand people, 252 tanks, 814 guns and mortars.

Significantly weaker were the forces and means of the 51st Army, which occupied the defense in a strip of about 140 km. The army had 34,000 men, 77 tanks, 419 guns and mortars. The operational density in the army zone was only one division per 28 km of front, 0.5 tanks and about 3 guns and mortars per | km front. Divisions numbered on average up to 4 thousand people, in companies there were 30-35 people each. The 28th Army had 44,000 men, 40 tanks, 707 guns and mortars. The army defended itself along a front up to 130 km long. The material support of the 5th shock and 51st armies was insufficient, especially in relation to ammunition and fuel.

For a deeper coverage of the events that took place on the outer front of the Stalingrad encirclement, it is proposed to look at excerpts from the reports of the Soviet Form Bureau for the period from December 3 to December 11, 1942.

December 4

Evening message

During December 4, our troops in the Stalingrad area, continuing the offensive, occupied the settlements of Yakty-Yul, Senyshyn, Savinsky, Lisinsky, Popov, Verkhne-Chirsky, Chepurin, Deev, Parshin and the station of Secrets.

On December 3, units of our aviation in various sectors of the front destroyed 14 German tanks, up to 200 vehicles with troops and various cargoes, blew up 2 ammunition depots, smashed a train, suppressed the fire of 10 artillery batteries, dispersed and partly destroyed up to an enemy infantry battalion.

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5th of December

On December 4, parts of our aviation at various sites



10 German tanks and up to 300 vehicles with troops and various cargoes were destroyed at the front lines. Two trains were destroyed, the fire of 10 batteries of field and anti-aircraft artillery was suppressed, two battalions of infantry and a squadron of enemy cavalry were scattered and partly destroyed.

December 6

Over the past week, from November 29 to December 5 inclusive, 192 German aircraft, including 108 three-engine transport aircraft, were destroyed in air battles, at airfields and by anti-aircraft artillery fire. Our losses during the same time are 102 aircraft.

December 7

During December 7, our troops in the Stalingrad region and on the Central Front continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

December 8

During December 8, our troops in the Stalingrad area and on the Central Front continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

On December 7, 44 enemy transport aircraft were destroyed in the Stalingrad area.

9th December

During December 9, our troops in the area of Stalingrad and on the Central Front continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

On December 8, 24 enemy transport aircraft were destroyed in the Stalingrad area.

On December 8, units of our aviation in various sectors of the front destroyed or damaged 25 German tanks, up to 200 vehicles with troops and cargo,

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flax fire of 6 artillery batteries, 2 railway trains were broken, dispersed and partly destroyed to the enemy infantry battalion.

December 10

During December 10, our troops in the Stalin-

grad and on the Central Front continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

On December 8, not 24 enemy transport aircraft were destroyed near Stalingrad, as previously reported, but 29 enemy transport aircraft.

On December 9, units of our aviation in various sectors of the front destroyed or damaged up to 30 German tanks, up to 200 vehicles with troops and cargo, suppressed the fire of 10 artillery batteries, blew up an ammunition depot, dispersed and partly destroyed up to two enemy infantry battalions. |

December 11th

During December 11, our troops in the area of Stalingrad and on the Central Front continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

On December 10, 60 enemy transport aircraft were destroyed in the Stalingrad area.

On December 10, units of our aviation in various sectors of the front destroyed or damaged 10 German tanks, up to 200 vehicles with troops and cargo, fire was suppressed by 7 artillery batteries, two railway trains were destroyed, 2 ammunition depots and a fuel depot were blown up, dispersed and partly destroyed up to two battalions of enemy infantry.

## SITUATION ON DECEMBER 12

From the morning summary of the Sovinformburo on December 12:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our soldiers destroyed the enemy cavalry squadron. In another section, an infantry battalion and 13 enemy tanks attacked our stronghold. The fighters of the N-th unit repulsed the attack of the Nazis. As a result of the battle, up to 300 German soldiers and officers were destroyed and 3 enemy tanks were knocked out.

On December 12, the enemy's 336th infantry, 7th airfield and 11th tank divisions operated in front of the 5th shock army sector, 10 enemy divisions opposed the 51st army, and the 16th army in the Elista area not a German motorized division. In the Tormosin area was the 17th Panzer Division - the reserve of Army Group Don.

The enemy command, concentrating strike groupings in the areas of Kotelnikovo and Tormosin, was able to create a grouping by December 12 only in the area of Kotelnikovo. The composition of this group, which received the code name of the army group "Got", in accordance with

Wii with the records of G. Derr, included the 4th Panzer Army.

East of the Don, the German 16th motorized division, the 4th Romanian army as part of the 6th and 7th army corps, battle groups of the 2nd German communications headquarters, as well as the 57th German tank corps as part of the 6th and 23rd Panzer Divisions.

West of the Don, combat operations were conducted by the Adam combat group, which was based on units of the 384th German

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infantry division, the 48th tank corps and the Stumpfeld battle group.

In the area of the Zimovniki station, the headquarters of the 3rd Romanian army was located, which included the Shtakhel group, the Shpanga group, as well as the 17th army corps with the 1st 2nd Romanian army corps (Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - S. 89).

The book "The Great Victory on the Volga" indicates that the army group "Goth" included the 57th tank corps (6th and 23rd tank, 15th airfield divisions). A separate tank battalion equipped with the new Gigr heavy tanks was also to take part in the offensive (Great Victory on the Volga. - p. 373).

Field Marshal General Manstein, seeing the impossibility of creating two strike groups, decided to launch an offensive with the forces of one Kotelnikov group (the Goth army group). A breakthrough from here to the front of the encirclement of Soviet troops was planned by delivering a blow on a narrow sector of the front along the Tikhoretsk-Stalingrad railway.

The plans of the enemy were unraveled by the command of the Stalingrad Front, which took measures to repel attacks being prepared by the enemy from the Kotelnikovo area and from the bridgehead at Nizhne-Chirskaya. At the same time, the possibility of a counter strike from the encirclement was also taken into account.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, correctly assessing the current situation, temporarily postponed the operation to destroy the encircled group. The troops of the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts were tasked with eliminating enemy attempts to break through to the Paulus grouping and restore their positions near Stalingrad.

By December 12, the balance of forces on the outer front of the encirclement was as follows: the 5th shock and 51st armies had eight rifle divisions, a fortified area, tank and mechanized and two cavalry corps, four tank brigades, eight artillery

and mortar regiments of the RVGK and two regiments of jet ar

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tilleria. These troops were opposed by the Goth group, which consisted of 13 divisions.

The correlation of forces and means on the outer front of the encirclement by the time under consideration is seen from the table.

FORCES AND EQUIPMENT IN THE BANDS OF THE 5TH  
Shock AND 51st ARMIES (FRONT - 235 km)

Soviet Troops | 2 | soy

History of World War II, 1939-1945. T. 6. S. 64.

Thus, the enemy had twice as many tanks and aircraft. The Nazis directed the greatest number of forces and means against the 51st Army, weakened in battles. Here the enemy had superiority in men and artillery by 2 times, and in tanks by more than 6 times.

At that time, the commander of the Stalingrad Front, A. I. Eremenko, in his book on the balance of forces and means on December 12, writes:

"By the beginning of the offensive of the Gota-Manshtein grouping, the balance of forces of the 51st Army and the Kotelnikovsky grouping of the enemy had developed in favor of the enemy. In terms of personnel, it was |: 1.2; for field and anti-tank artillery - 1: 1.9; for tanks - 1:5. Thus, in front of the front of our 51st Army, the enemy succeeded in creating a double superiority in artillery and a fivefold superiority in tanks. In the direction of the main attack, the balance of forces was even greater in favor of the enemy.

However, on the question of the correlation of forces, Manstein in

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in his work "Lost Victories" tries to mislead the reader. In terms of the concept of formation, he puts on the same level, on the one hand, the German tank divisions, on the other hand, our tank and mechanized brigades, which were inferior to them in strength by about 5-6 times.

Such a manipulation with the balance of forces

Manstein led to the assertion that our forces allegedly exceeded the German fascist ones by several times, which in reality, as we see from the above correlation of forces, was not.

Manstein downplays his forces in every possible way, arguing that Hoth's strike group had only two tank divisions and either one or two airfield divisions. In this lie, the retired field marshal is exposed by his own colleagues, Tippleskirch and Butlar, who unanimously declare that Hoth had four tank, one infantry and three airfield divisions. It has been documented that the Gota group included the 23rd, 6th, 17th tank, 16th and SS Viking motorized divisions, the 6th and 7th Romanian army corps and the 15th German airfield division "(Yoremenko . - S. 400).

And another source is the memoirs of A. M. Vasilevsky, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. In them we read the following: "By the evening of December 12, the advanced units of the 6th Panzer Division of the enemy in some areas had already approached the southern bank of the Aksai, and its 23rd Panzer Division, advancing along the railway, had reached the area, which 10— 15 km south of the railway and highway bridge across the Aksai near Kruglyakov. The correlation of forces on the front of the 51st Army was then approximately as follows: we had 34,000 men, the enemy had 76,000; tanks - 77 against 500; guns and mortars (with a caliber of 76 mm and larger) - 147 against 340. Thus, our 51st army found itself in an extremely difficult position "(Vasilevsky A.M. The matter of all life. - P. 247).

Before the release operation, Manstein had certain advantages in the sector of the front where his strike was planned. The position of the Soviet troops here

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was dangerous. However, the overall correlation of forces on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, including the area of Stalingrad, did not create the prerequisites for achieving the goals of the Nazi high command. The most the enemy could achieve was to link up with the 6th Army and restore its active role. There is no doubt that this would inevitably complicate the military situation for the Soviet side and would require additional efforts and sacrifices to defeat the enemy in the south. The combat skill and heroism of the Soviet troops determined such a development of events that overturned plans for

tivnik.

## PLANS AND CREATION OF THE GERMAN TROOPS

Deciding to release the encircled near Stalingrad

Paulus' troops, the Wehrmacht High Command organized a new Army Group "Don", between Army Groups "A" and "B". The command of this army group was entrusted to Field Marshal von Manstein. It included: Task Force Hollidt (in the Tormosin area), the remnants of the 3rd Romanian Army, the 4th German Panzer Army (newly created from the headquarters of the former 4th Panzer Army and formations that arrived from the reserve) and 4th Romanian army as part of the 6th and 7th Romanian corps.

Divisions from the Caucasus, near Voronezh, Orel, and from France, Germany, and Poland were hastily transferred to reinforce Army Group Don. Manstein was also subordinate to the troops surrounded in the Stalingrad region. Army Group "Don" occupied a front with a total length of 600 km, from the village of Veshenskaya on the Don to the river. Ma nych. It consisted of up to 30 divisions, including six armored and one motorized, not counting the formations surrounded at Stalingrad. In front of the troops of the Southwestern Front were 17 divisions from the Don Army Group, and 13 divisions (combined into the Goth Army Group) opposed the troops of the 5th Shock Army and the 51st Army of the Stalingrad Front. Manstein in his memoirs talks about how the Don army group was formed. By order of the OKH, the headquarters of the 11th German Army, located in the Vitebsk region, was used as its department.

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On November 24, E. von Manstein and his entourage arrived at the headquarters of Army Group B in Starobelsk, where he was acquainted with the situation by the commander of the group, Colonel-General von Weichs, and the chief of staff, General von Zodenstern.

Army Group Don, in addition to the 6th Army encircled in Stalingrad, initially included the remnants of the defeated 4th Panzer Army and two Romanian armies and, finally, the German 16th Motorized Division, which did not participate in the battles, and four more combat-ready Romanian divisions.

"The following new forces were allocated to the group: in the 4th Panzer Army (for an attack on Stalingrad from the south in order to release the troops stationed there) from Army Group A, the headquarters of the 57th Panzer Corps with the 23rd Panzer Division and significant forces of the ARGC, as well as the newly replenished 6th Panzer Division, which was supposed to arrive from Western Europe.

On the left flank of the 3rd Romanian Army - one corps headquarters and 4-5 divisions (the so-called Hollidta group) - with the task of advancing from the Upper Chir in an easterly direction in order to unblock Stalingrad.

At the headquarters of Army Group B they showed me a radiogram sent to Hitler by the commander of the 6th Army, General Paulus (if I am not mistaken, on November 22 or 23). He reported that, in his opinion, as in the opinion of all his corps commanders, a breakthrough of the army in a southwestern direction was absolutely necessary. True, in order to obtain the forces necessary for this, it was necessary to regroup the forces of the army and withdraw the northern flank in order to reduce it and release the necessary forces. At the headquarters of Army Group "B" it was believed that even with Hitler's slow consent, the breakthrough could not be started until November 28th. But Hitler did not give his consent ... "

E. von Manstein, put by Hitler at the head of the Don army group and having received the order to release the Paulus group surrounded by Soviet troops near Stalingrad, was a tried and tested fascist military leader who gained fame in

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many aggressive campaigns of the Nazi army. Subsequently, Paulus characterized him as a military leader who "enjoyed the reputation of a man of high qualifications and operational intelligence, and able to defend his opinion before Hitler." Major General F. von Mellenthin, who was appointed chief of staff of the 48th Panzer Corps on November 27, talking about his trip from Hitler's headquarters to the headquarters of Army Group Don, does not skimp on colors, dwelling on the personality of Manstein. "On the morning of November 28, I flew by plane to Rostov, where I was supposed to report to the newly created headquarters of Army Group Don. The flight from East Prussia on the old tried and tested Ju-52 seemed to me infinitely long. We flew over ruined Warsaw, then crossed the roadless region of the Pinsk marshes and the snow-covered steppes of Ukraine, and after a short landing in Poltava with its ominous monuments reminiscent of the invasion of Charles XI, we arrived in Rostov in the afternoon. Having made a flight of 2,400 km, I could form a clear idea of the boundless expanses of Russia and those vast distances over which hostilities are being conducted.

That same evening I reported to Field Marshal von Manstein and his chief of staff, General Wehler. Since visiting our division in Poland in 1940, Manstein has aged very much, but his authority has grown, and the feats accomplished at the beginning of the war with Russia and then in the conquest of the Crimea brought him such fame that any commander in the Eastern front. As a specialist in conducting siege operations, he was once sent to the Leningrad sector of the front to develop a plan to capture the old Russian capital, and was subsequently transferred to Stalingrad with the task of restoring the situation on the Don and organizing the deblockade of the encircled

in Stalingrad of the German group. Manstein, who was aptly called a man "hiding his feelings under a mask of icy calm," directed me

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to Colonel Busse, the first officer of the headquarters of Army Group Don.

With undisguised pessimism, Mellenthin describes the end of his journey to the 48th Panzer Corps. "At dawn on November 29, I flew to the command post of the 48th Panzer Corps. We flew on the Storch and, together with the pilot, looked down very carefully, afraid of making a mistake and landing on the other side of the front. The plane flew just above the ground, and I got a fairly complete picture of "Mother Russia". The area on both banks of the Don is a huge boundless steppe; only occasionally do you come across deep ravines in which villages hide. The landscape was reminiscent of the desert of North Africa, only instead of sand, snow lay below in a white carpet. When we landed at a small front airfield, I realized that a new and very dark period of my 'service in the army' had begun.

E. Manstein writes in detail about the situation that developed in connection with the encirclement of German troops near Stalingrad. In his story, along with concrete details worthy of attention, there is also a lot of tendentious, incorrect. Thus, he asserts that 200,000-220,000 encircled troops ended up in the Stalingrad "cauldron", although there were 330,000 of them. Assessing the position of Paulus' troops, he emphasizes the decisive, in his opinion, importance of supplying them by air. At the same time, he lays all responsibility for the miscalculation made here on Hitler and Goering, following the manner adopted in this respect by the post-war memoirs of Hitler's generals. At the same time, he speaks of the insufficiency of the forces that he had as the commander of Army Group "Don" to deliver a deblocking strike. "... It soon became clear," writes Manstein, "that the original plan was to launch strikes by the forces of the 4th Panzer Army from the Kotelnikovo area east of the Don River and the forces of the Hollidt group from Sredny Chir to Kalach in order to release the 6th Army — turns out to be impossible due to lack of forces. It could be,

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however, to count on the fact that it will be possible to concentrate enough forces in one place. In the present state of affairs, only the 4th Panzer Army could be used for a deblocking blow. She was closer to Stalingrad. On her way to Stalingrad, she did not come



it would be possible to overcome the Don. One could also hope that the enemy would least of all expect such an offensive on the eastern bank of the Don, since under the situation at the front, the concentration of large forces in this area would be associated with great risk for the Germans. Therefore, the enemy initially advanced only relatively weak forces in the direction of Kotelnikovo to cover the internal front of the encirclement. Here, at first, the 4th Panzer Army was opposed only by 5 enemy divisions, while the bunk. Chir enemy already had 15 divisions.

To accomplish the assigned tasks, E. von Manstein planned to deliver two deblocking blows. The 4th tank army of the Goth army group was to launch an offensive with the main forces from the Kotelnikovo area east of the Don. Its main task was to break through the front of the cover, hit the rear or flank of the troops of the Red Army south or west of Stalingrad and defeat them. The 48th tank corps from the army group "Hollidt" was supposed to strike at the rear of the enemy covering troops from the bridgehead on the Don and Chir rivers in the area of the village of Nizhne-Chirskaya.

In the event that, even before the start of the offensive, the number of Red Army troops in front of the front of the 4th Panzer Army north of Kotelnikov increases significantly, or if a critical situation arises again on the front of the 4th Romanian Army, covering the eastern flank, the order provided for the following fallback: the tank divisions of the 4th Panzer Army were to be urgently transferred along the western bank of the Don to the north, to the Don-Chirsky bridgehead in Nizhne-Chirskaya and deliver the main blow from there. A smaller strike group from the Don-Chirsky bridgehead was supposed to strike west of the Don River on Kalach in order to break the front and

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open the way for the 6th Army across the Don along the bridge. The 6th Army was ordered by the command of Army Group "Don" to prepare for a breakthrough in a southerly direction towards the Army Group Gotha. The exit of the 6th Army from the "cauldron" was to begin according to the "Donnershlag" plan.

This version of Operation Wintergewitter was outlined in the order of Army Group Don dated | December 1942.

But the exact date of the offensive was not determined, however, the operation could begin no earlier than December 8th. This situation was due to a delay in the collection of forces: the Hollidt army group did not have time to take up initial positions for the offensive due to insufficient road capacity, and the 4th Panzer Army was waiting for the arrival of the 23rd Panzer Division, which, due to the thaw in the Caucasus could not move under its own power and traveled by rail. Operation start day

was named December 12.

A few days later, Manstein was forced to revise the initial plan due to the unsatisfactory state of the equipment of the shock groups. Of the seven divisions intended for the Hollidt group, two (62nd and 294th infantry divisions) were already involved in battles on the front of the 3rd Romanian army, and the operational state did not allow them to be recalled back. The 3rd Mountain Rifle Division did not arrive at all; by order of the OKH, it was transferred to Army Group A, and then to Army Group Center. Army Group "A" also detained the artillery of the reserve of the main command.

The activation of the Red Army units on the front of the 3rd Romanian Army forced its headquarters to report: "At the moment, the forces of the 48th Panzer Corps are not enough to simultaneously fight the breakthroughs and the counteroffensive scheduled for December 12th."

Since it was impossible to risk the stability of the Chir front, Manstein decided to give up two deblocking blows. It was finally decided that the 4th Panzer Army was to deliver the main blow.

The main role in the decisive blow was assigned to

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57th Panzer Corps. It consisted of two divisions: under the former French 6th Panzer Division (160 tanks and 40 self-propelled guns) and the 23rd Panzer Division, which arrived from the Caucasus (30 tanks).

| December, the command of the army group gave the order to carry out the operation "Wintergewitter" (German: UMT- {egeyShcheg - "Winter Thunderstorm"), which provided for the following.

The 4th Panzer Army was to launch an offensive with the main forces from the Kotelnikovo area east. Don. The start of the offensive was scheduled for 8 December. The troops of the army were proposed to break through the front of the cover, hit the rear or flank of the Soviet troops occupying the inner front of the encirclement to the south or west of Stalingrad, and defeat them.

The 48th tank corps from the Hollidt group was supposed to strike at the rear of the Soviet troops from the bridgehead on the Don and Chir rivers in the area of the village of Nizhne-Chirskaya.

The 6th Army, in accordance with Hitler's categorical order, was asked to hold its former positions in the "boiler". At the same time, on a certain day, indicated by the headquarters of the army group, the 6th army was supposed to break through on the southwestern sector of the encirclement front in the direction

leniya on the river. Donskaya Tsaritsa and link up with the advancing 4th Panzer Army.

The enemy troops, entrenched at the turn of the river. Chir near Nizhne-Chirskaya, were only 40 km from the encircled troops of Paulus, while the Kotelnikov group (army group "Got") was removed from them before the start of the offensive at a distance of 120 km. Nevertheless, E. von Manstein decided to attack from here. "He refused to force the Don, as a risky and difficult operation, and chose the Kotelnikovo area southeast of the Don for his actions: in his opinion, it was from here that it was most profitable to start the offensive."

The decision to launch a deblocking blow from Kotelnikovo depended on a number of factors, and above all on the situation that was actually taking shape at that time. On this occasion

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du Scheibert writes that, after the Soviet troops strengthened the encirclement, they immediately launched attacks against the German side along the Chir River. The center of these attacks was the lower reaches of the river and the bridgehead at its mouth near the Don. Hitler's troops have completely exhausted their capabilities here. Finally, with the help of troops united under the command of the 48th Panzer Corps, the enemy succeeded in repelling these attacks. But before the Hollidt strike group, intended as the main force for the deblocking operation, managed to approach the German defensive front along the Chir River at the end of November, the newly created 48th Panzer Corps was already lost for the deblocking operation.

"The 48th Panzer Corps not only failed to contribute to this strike with the help of the operation from the Chirsky bridgehead - on the contrary, on December 15 it was forced to surrender this position, which was closest to the encircled troops."

About the preparation of a deblocking strike from the Kotelnikovo area, H. Scheibert cites data in his other book; "Stalingrad is 48 kilometers away. Unblocking strike of the 6th Panzer Division, December 1942. Scheibert was the commander of the 8th tank company of the 11th tank regiment (Colonel Gunersdorf) of the 6th tank division, Major General Raus. This division, along with the 23rd Panzer Division, and then the 17th Panzer Division, was part of General Kirchner's 57th Panzer Corps. The corps became the main armored fist with which the Nazi command tried to make a breach in the encirclement. Talking about the practical side of the preparation of the strike, Scheibert gives details showing the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy troops involved in the counterattack, in particular the 6th Panzer Division. She play-

almost played the main role among the formations of the 57th tank corps.

Scheibert also writes about the events that immediately preceded the transfer of the 6th Panzer Division to the Stalingrad region. So, he reports that after hard winters

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of them fighting in 1941-1942. in the Moscow area, the 6th Panzer Division was transferred to France in May 1942 for replenishment and rearmament, the 11th Panzer Regiment, which was armed with Czechoslovak Skoda-35 vehicles, was supposed to receive new German vehicles instead. The tank regiment was deployed throughout the wartime states, as was the entire 6th Panzer Division. The division was a well-armed unit. Along with experienced chief corporals, it had a core of non-commissioned officers and officers. The units were cohesive and had combat experience. Scheibert writes: "The combat effectiveness of the division can be assessed as outstanding. Everyone felt his great superiority over the enemy, believed in the strength of his weapons, in the preparedness of the commanders.

In November, the loading of the first echelons began. "We didn't get to Paris," writes Scheibert, "our echelons went by detour routes, then crossed West Germany and, moving further to the East, passed Berlin ... When we reached Baranovichi in Belarus, the partisan region began. The destroyed locomotives and wagons on both sides of the railway line clearly showed what a fierce small war was going on here. Everywhere in this vast wooded area, right up to Gomel, there was a strong guard of the railroad tracks. The locomotive was pushing a wagon filled with sand in front of it as protection against mines. Bryansk lay in deep snow. We moved on through Kursk to Belgorod, where the terrain was more open. Further lay Ukraine with its expanses of the steppe, stretching south to east. The conversations were dominated by messages about Stalingrad. Despite the caution of the first reports, it was clear that on November 21 large military formations were surrounded and that fighting was now continuing outside the pocket. It became clear to the officers that the 6th Panzer Division would sooner or later operate in this area.

Field Marshal Manstein, on his way from Vitebsk to take up the post of commander of the Don Army Group, received in Kharkov the commander of the 6th Panzer Division

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zii Major General Routh. Together they drove to Rostov, and Manstein personally informed Routh about the situation.

novka and ordered that the division, in a change to the original order, concentrate not in Millerovo, but southwest of Kotelnikov, become part of the 57th tank corps and conduct containment battles in this sector. Manstein was aware of the actions of the Soviet troops that their 4th Cavalry Corps, reinforced with tanks and supported by two infantry divisions, was advancing on both sides of the railway line leading from Stalingrad to Kotelnikovo.

On the morning of November 27, an echelon of the 6th Panzer Division arrived at Kotelnikovo. Just at this time, after artillery shelling, Soviet units broke into the city. "In just a few minutes, the division reported on the first dead and wounded." Arrived (from the Caucasus) and parts of the 23rd Panzer Division, which were supposed to operate to the right of the 6th Panzer Division.

The enemy was forced to postpone the date for the start of the deblocking strike, first to the 8th and then to the 12th of December. There was a concentration of troops intended for the offensive.

By December 5, the 6th Panzer Division was completely concentrated in the Kotelnikovo area, its motorized infantry and artillery took up defensive positions about 15 km east of the city. On December 11, Manstein gave the order to begin the operation. The situation on the southern sector of the front was such that "in the future, the deblockade of Stalingrad could become impossible at all."

The enemy decided to strike with the forces of the 6th and 23rd Panzer Divisions, which were later joined by the 17th Panzer Division. General Paulus Manstein suggested that a counter-strike be made from the "cauldron".

Employees of the Institute of Military History and other experts believe that the German command, having decided on a counterattack in the Kotelnikov area, no doubt, took a huge risk. After all, without a decisive superiority in forces on the board chosen for the offensive, it was difficult to count on success. That's why

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when launching a counterattack in this direction, the command of the Don Army Group placed its main stake on achieving surprise. According to his calculations, the massive use of tanks, artillery and aviation on a narrow sector of the front would make it possible to quickly break through the defenses and, through the rapid development of the offensive by the tank strike group, link up with the 6th Army even before the Soviet troops, stunned by an unexpected blow, could take any or countermeasures. It was the suddenness, according to Manstein's plan, that was supposed to confuse all the cards of the Soviet command, disorganize its actions and lead to inevitable similarities.

situation, mistakes that he will not be slow to take advantage of. Only this can explain the haste, rare for the German command, with which this insufficiently provided operation was undertaken. One of the best commanders of the Reich, 55-year-old Field Marshal General Erich von Manstein-Lewinsky, went for broke. He preferred risk, largely based on the use of random factors, to a sober consideration of the totality of real factors.

## PLANS OF THE SOVIET COMMAND

The attention of the Soviet command in the first decade of December 1942 was focused on the simultaneous solution of several tasks: combat operations to eliminate encircled troops, strengthen the outer front of the encirclement, and prepare for an operation to defeat the enemy in the Middle Don, the plan of which was approved by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on December 3. The start of Operation Saturn was scheduled for December 10th. However, at the request of the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, General N.N. Voronov and the Military Council of the front, who referred to the incompleteness of the preparatory measures, this deadline was postponed to December 16.

By the end of December 11, the troops of the Stalingrad Front, operating on the outer front, which at that time passed along the line of the mouth of the river. Liska (a tributary of the Chir River), Verkh non-Kurmoyarskaya, Verkhne-Yablochny, the 51st Army of General N.I. Trufanov, to the left of it, in the Kalmyk steppes, - the 28th army. The total length of the outer front of encirclement in the zone of the Staligrad Front reached 360 km. Its distance from the inner front of the encirclement on the right flank did not exceed 40 km, and on the Kotelnikovsky direction - 100-105 km. The newly formed 5th Shock Army (General M.M. Popov) continued to deploy on the right flank of the outer encirclement front (near the mouth of the Chir and to the south). It also included the 87th, 300th and 315th Rifle Divisions, which had previously been in the reserve of the Stalingrad Front. After that, only the 235th Separate Flamethrower Tank Brigade, the 234th Separate Tank Regiment, and the 20th Fighter Brigade remained in the reserve of the front.

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By December 12, the Stalingrad Front had 38.5 calculated divisions, 274 thousand personnel, 578 tanks, 5017 guns and mortars (caliber 76 mm and above). His forces were almost evenly distributed on the internal and external fronts of the encirclement. However, most of the tanks - 369 units - were concentrated on the outer front. The main forces of the 8th Air Army—320 aircraft—supported the troops on the home front.

By the beginning of the German counterattack in the Kotelnikovsky direction, the 51st Army was operating in a 140-kilometer zone. In previous battles, she suffered significant losses and had a 50% shortage in people and military equipment. In total, there were 34 thousand people, 159 guns, 195 mortars, 65 anti-aircraft guns, 1809 vehicles and 105 tanks. The provision of material resources was only half of the set of ammunition and up to 3/4 of the fuel filling (Yoremenco A.I. Stalingrad: Notes of the Front Commander. M., 1961. P. 369; TsAMO. F. 220, op. 459, d 4, l. 426; Op. 468, file 24, l. 40, 143; The Great Victory on the Volga, p. 370).

For more than two weeks, the army waged continuous offensive battles in the Kotelnikovsky direction and only from December 9 began to consolidate on the achieved lines. Therefore, its formations managed to prepare only the main line of defense, the depth of which did not exceed 2-3 km.

The defense of the troops of the 51st Army in terms of engineering was poorly prepared, since earthworks began only on December 9 and in winter conditions were carried out extremely slowly. Since the divisions were defending in very wide bands - up to 28 km - they could not create a continuous front of defense. On the front line there were separate strongholds with large gaps between them (from 2 to 4 kilometers), which were weakly covered by artillery and mortar fire. Minefields were planted in a number of areas. In strongpoints, only trenches for rifle squads and platforms for fire weapons were prepared.

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In order to cover a large front, it was necessary to concentrate most of the forces on the front line of defense. Therefore, the operational formation of the army, as well as the combat formations of formations and units, was one-echelon. In the area of the settlement of Aksai, which is 30 km from the front line, its reserve was located - the 13th tank corps (31 tanks, including 13 T-60 light tanks). In general, the 51st Army was significantly inferior to the enemy in terms of forces and means.

RELATION OF FORCES AND EQUIPMENT IN THE  
STRIP OF THE 51st ARMY ON DECEMBER 12, 1942

Soviet Troops about  
Forces and means of  
the Division (estimated) | || People,  
thousand people ÿ ÿ t

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th 75/76  
mm and above), pcs.

Thus, in the direction of its main attack, the German command created the superiority necessary for conducting offensive operations, primarily in tanks and artillery. It also achieved some advantage in aviation (1.6: 1). The fact that the Germans had concentrated large forces in the Kotelnikovo area became known to the command of the Stalingrad Front as early as the first days of December.

However, when on December 2 intelligence reported the appearance in the Zimovniki area of units of the 6th Panzer Division, which had arrived from France, this did not cause concern to General Eremenko and his assistants. The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command did not pay due attention to the Kotelnikovsky direction. First of all, she decided to liquidate the enemy's parade ground on the Chir and Don in order to deprive him of the opportunity to use them for

strike in the direction of Stalingrad. Here it was supposed to use the newly created 5th shock

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army. Unfortunately, there is no explanation for such a decision in archival documents. But, apparently, the very idea of the enemy launching a counterattack with the forces he had in the Kotelnikovo area seemed unlikely to the Soviet command.

Based on intelligence data, the Soviet command proceeded from the fact that earlier on December 14-16, the Germans would not be able to start the operation to release the 6th Army. Therefore, their counterattack in the Kotelnikovo area turned out to be a complete surprise. This, in particular, is evidenced by the intelligence report of the headquarters of the Stalingrad Front of December 12. It noted that "the enemy continues to prepare an operation to connect with the troops encircled in Stalingrad" (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 453, d. 8, l. 106, 129).

Thus, neither intelligence nor military intelligence of the Stalingrad Front were able to recognize the enemy's plans being prepared to the extent necessary for making specific decisions. Therefore, in the plans of the Soviet command there is not the slightest hint of the possibility of the enemy going over to a decisive offensive in the Kotelnikovsky direction, which began two and a half hours after this report.

However, in his memoirs, the commander of the Stalingrad Front, Eremenko, writes the following:



"From the very beginning of the formation of this grouping, the command of the Stalingrad Front feared that the main blow would be dealt by this particular grouping from the Kotelnikovo area. Both from the point of view of the choice of the area for its concentration, and from the point of view of the speed and decisiveness of this concentration, as well as the quality of the forces being brought up, it could be assumed that the measures being carried out here have far-reaching goals. The front command began to take all measures in its power so as not to be taken by surprise.

We turned to JV Stalin with a request to provide us with assistance in the form of tank units. We believed that it was necessary to strike at Kotelnikovo, in the area of which the main grouping was concentrated, before

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assigned to free the encircled. But JV Stalin promised us insignificant help - three tank regiments (that is, 60 tanks).

Comrade Vasilevsky, the representative of the Headquarters, assuming that the enemy would strike with the aim of deblocking from the Tormosin area, proposed to secure the outer front of the encirclement along the line Gromoslovka, Abganerovo, Ivanovka.

Running a little ahead, I will say that further military operations showed that if we had created our own external front in accordance with this proposal, then, firstly, we would not have reconnoitered the concentration of the enemy in the Kotelnikovo area, and this would have led to that an enemy strike from here would have been unexpected for us; secondly, our outer front would be so close to the encircled ones (about 40 km) that, in the event of a sudden attack, the enemy could overcome our defenses in 1-2 days.

In order to prove the correctness of their conclusions, the command of the Stalingrad Front decided, in order to reconnoiter the enemy forces and to move the outer front of the encirclement to a great depth from the encircled enemy troops, to strike with the available forces of two rifle divisions that had previously operated on a wide front (albeit, weakened previous battles), two, also small, cavalry divisions of the 4th Cavalry Corps, supported by a tank brigade. We believed that in this way it would be possible to finally clarify the real situation in the Kotelnikovo area: if the enemy did not concentrate forces there for the main attack, but only distracted our attention from the Tormosinsky group, as Comrade Vasilevsky believed, we would have the available ones (listed above) by the forces of the boats of Kotelnikovo; if it is from here that the enemy intends to strike his main blow, as we believed, then-

Where our actions will result in a major operational reconnaissance and reveal to all of us the true meaning of the enemy's intentions; at the same time, our outer front will move about 40-50 kilometers farther, which will play an important role in strengthening the encirclement."

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#### DEFENSIVE BATTLES OF THE TROOPS OF THE 51st ARMY (DECEMBER 12-17)

12 December

From the evening reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

"Southwest of Stalingrad, the enemy launched several counterattacks, which were repulsed by our soldiers. In another section of the nemiya, up to 2 regiments of infantry and with the support of 80 tanks attacked our positions. Fierce battles ensued, during which our fighters inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

November 12, 1942 was the first heavy snowfall. White flakes falling from the sky hid opponents from each other. Almost nothing could be seen across the strip of no man's land. The vague contours of positions, forward posts, barbed wire were only occasionally visible through the snow layers. In the same way, at the headquarters of the armies opposing each other, they looked at the vague contours of enemy groupings. Intelligence gave only a blurred outline of the actual composition of those troops that were soon to be faced in mortal combat.

The offensive of the Goth army group began at 8 am on December 12 after a short but powerful artillery fire attack and air strikes on the battle formations of the 51st Army units. Operating from the Kotelnikovo area in a general direction to the northeast, the enemy delivered the main blow on a narrow sector of the front along the Tikhoretsk-Stalingrad railway. The 6th and 23rd tank divisions of the 57th tank attacked here.

corps, which were opposed by the 302nd and 126th rifle divisions of the 51st army. On the flanks of the tank divisions, German fascist cavalry and infantry troops operated. The connection with the Paulus grouping was marked southwest of st. Tundutovo (height with a mark of 180 to the east of Zeta). After artillery preparation, the enemy broke through the defenses in the zone of the 302nd Infantry Division of Colonel E.F. Makarchuk at the substation Kur Moyarsky. The soldiers of this division put up stubborn resistance.

With the onset of darkness, the advanced units of the 6th Panzer Division reached the southern bank of the river in separate areas. Aksai, and the 23rd Panzer Division to the area north of Nebykov. Parts of the 302nd Infantry Division withdrew to the line Chilekov - Nebykov - the state farm "Ternovy". Ovladev Gremyachy and passing the 161st km, the Nazis tried to reach the flank and rear of the 126th Infantry Division, pressed its right flank regiment, but were stopped

fiefs.

Colonel-General A.I. Eremenko demanded that the commander of the 51st Army, Major General N.I. Trufanov, hold the line occupied by his troops and restore the situation in the sector of the 302nd Infantry Division. The 235th flamethrower tank brigade and the 87th rifle division were sent from the front reserve to reinforce the army. At the same time, the commander of the 5th shock army, Lieutenant General M. M. Popov, was ordered to speed up the concentration of army troops for an offensive in the Rychkovsky area in order to eliminate the German bridgehead there.

About the actions of the Nazi troops during the deblocking strike, H. Scheibert reports that before the offensive operation was carried out, the 6th Panzer Division was divided into four battle groups: three weaker motorized infantry groups (Zollenkopf, Unrein and Quentin) and one strong tank division. Gunersdorf group. Summing up the results of the first day of the offensive, he writes that the most important of the goals set to achieve

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was not tuginut - it was not possible to capture the crossing over the river. Aksai.

On the beginning of the enemy counterattack in the Kotelnikovo area, the commander of the troops of the Staligrad Front, Colonel General A.I. Eremenko immediately reported to the Supreme Commander. In response, he heard: "Hold on. We will immediately send reserves "(Eremenko A.I. Decree. Op. - P. 400).

December 13th

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

From the morning summary:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, the enemy tried to counter-attack our positions. Encountered by powerful artillery and mortar fire, the nemi rolled back to their original lines, leaving over 400 corpses on the battlefield. The N-th unit knocked out the enemy from fortified positions and captured 8 machine guns, 2 mortars and 126 rifles.

From the evening reports:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, the Nazis, with the help of infantry and tanks, went on the offensive against the positions defended by the N-th unit. Met by artillery fire, they retreated, leaving many corpses on the battlefield. Soon the enemy launched another three attacks after another. One group of German tanks managed to penetrate our defenses. Soviet gunners and armor-piercers knocked out 15 and burned 7 enemy tanks. Up to 500 non-German soldiers and officers were destroyed.

At dawn on December 13, the Nazi troops resumed their offensive. The enemy continued to deal the main blow against the 302nd Infantry Division. In order to stop the advance of the German tank divisions to the line of the Biryukovskiy junction - the state farm "Ternovy", units of the 13th Panzer Corps were brought into the battle. During the day, 30 attack aircraft of the 8th Air Army twice attacked German tanks in this sector. The enemy again failed to reach the flank and rear of the 126th Infantry Division. However, in the direction of the main attack, the enemy continued to crowd out units of the 302nd Infantry Division,

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who departed kr. Aksai. By the end of December 13, the enemy advanced units captured Vodyansky, Zalivsky, crossed Aksai and reached the Verkhne-Kum region.

sky.

The 6th Panzer Division (General E. Raus) continued to advance. As a result of the second day of the offensive, the 6th Panzer Division captured the bridgehead on the river. Aksai near Zalivsky, from here part of the forces advanced to the Verkhne-Kumsky farm and captured it. The 23rd Panzer Division, advancing from the Nebykov area, also reached the river, capturing a bridgehead near the railway and highway bridge near Kruglyakova.

In Scheibert's book, these events are described as follows:

"The Günersdorf group advanced 25 km in seven hours, capturing ... a crossing over the river. Aksai and creating a parade ground darm up to 10 km deep. She was far ahead of the main forces of both her own and the 23rd division ... The 23rd Panzer Division, advancing to the right, when crossing Aksai, did not push against the resistance of Russian tanks and was forced to ask for help from the 6th Panzer Division. To this end, two tank companies of the 6th Panzer Division were moved into the zone of the 23rd Division. By the end of the day, thus, it was possible to create two more bridgeheads on the northwestern coast of Aksai.

At the turn of the river Aksai-Esaulovsky unfolded a fierce struggle, the outcome of which largely depended on the further development of events at the front. Former fa-

The Shist general Mellenthin assesses the significance of these battles as follows:

"During this period, events full of tragedy took place, the historical significance of which can hardly be overestimated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the battle on the banks of this obscure river (Aksai-Esaulovsky. - Auth.) led to the crisis of the Third Reich, put an end to Hitler's hopes for the creation of an empire and was a decisive link in the chain of events that predetermined the defeat of Germany. This definition is not scientifically accurate, but it conveys the main meaning of events correctly.

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With the release of the troops of the army group "Got" to the Ak-sai river, there was a real danger of breaking through his outer front of the encirclement. The question then stood as follows: would the enemy be able to release his encircled grouping and restore the front near Stalingrad, or, conversely, would the Soviet troops liquidate this attempt, which should have led to far-reaching consequences.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command immediately saw the seriousness of the threat that had arisen and took measures that corresponded to the situation.

So, A. M. Vasilevsky writes:

"Having returned to Verkhne-Tsaritsynsky, I contacted the commander of the Stalingrad Front, who was in Raigorod; we agreed that he would immediately take care of strengthening the 51st Army and, in addition, you would divide part of the forces for organizing defense along the Myshkovo River. After that, I went to Zavarygin, so that, having notified the Headquarters, I could take more decisive measures against the Nazis advancing from Kotelnikov. I could not contact the Supreme Commander-in-Chief right away. Then I informed the commander of the Don Front, K.K. Rokossovsky, and the commander of the 2nd Guards Army, R.Ya. and the Guards Army to immediately send them south of Stalingrad, towards the advancing troops of Manstein. I suggested that Malinovsky immediately start organizing the transfer of ready-made units and formations of his army by a forced march to the Myshkova River in order to forestall the enemy and give him a decisive rebuff at the Myshkovo line.

After some time, a conversation took place with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. I reported on the beginning of a major offensive of the enemy tank troops from the direction of Kotelnikov, and also that with the release of these troops to the Aksai River, due to the lack of re-

the Serves created a serious danger of breaking through the outer front of the encirclement of Paulus' troops. To liquidate

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To counter this threat, serious and urgent measures are needed both to strengthen the external front and to strengthen the southern and southwestern fronts of the internal front. These measures are being taken, but they are far from sufficient. Further, I asked the Supreme Commander for permission to immediately begin the transfer of the incoming 2nd Guards Army to the Don Front and deploy it on the Myshkovo River, stop the advance of Manstein's troops, and later, having subordinated the 2nd Guards Army to the Stalingrad Front, defeat them, and the operation on whether the liquidation of the encircled troops of Paulus is temporarily postponed.

This proposal initially met with rather sharp objections from I. V. Stalin. He said that the question of the transfer of the 2nd Guards Army from the Don Front to the Stalingrad Front would be considered by the State Defense Committee.

With great excitement I awaited the decision of the Headquarters... At about 5 o'clock in the morning on December 13, I received appropriate instructions from the Supreme Commander. He ordered the transfer of the 2nd Guards from the Don to the Stalingrad Front on December 15, and he entrusted me with the leadership of the troops in the liquidation of the enemy deblocking groupings. In the coming days, I had to submit considerations for the use of the 2nd Guards Army in the Kotelnikovsky direction "(Vasilevsky A.M. The matter of all life. - P. 218-220).

December 14

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops were fighting enemy infantry and tanks. Artillerymen of the N-th part knocked out 10 German tanks and dispersed a large group of enemy infantry, in another sector our soldiers repulsed two German infantry counterattacks. As a result of the battle, over 200 Nazis were destroyed.

Evening message:

"Southwest of Stalingrad infantry and tanks

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ka resumed counterattacks of our positions. At the cost of heavy losses, they managed to slightly push our units. In this battle, the Soviet soldiers destroyed up to 1000 enemy soldiers and officers, destroyed 11 tanks and 7 self-propelled guns.

December 14 at 22:30 In a directive addressed to A. M. Vasilevsky, the Stavka demanded that, in view of the changed situation in the south, the implementation of the first stage of Operation "Ring" be postponed, it was proposed to move the 2nd Guards Army to the south in a forced march to be located in the rear of the units operating against the Kotelnikovskaya enemy group.

The commanders of the Don and Stalingrad fronts, Generals K. K. Rokossovsky and A. I. Eremenko, were ordered to "continue the systematic extermination of the encircled enemy troops from the air and ground forces, not to give the enemy a respite day or night, to tighten the encirclement more and more, to root out the attempts of those surrounded to break out of the ring.

"The main task of our southern troops is to defeat the enemy's Kotelnikov group, to occupy Kotelnikovo and firmly gain a foothold there with the forces of Trufanov and Yakovlev in the coming days."

Thus, the 2nd Guards Army was sent to defeat the enemy's Kotelnikov group. Prior to its approach to the battlefield, the onslaught of the Gotha group was to be held back by the troops of the Stalingrad Front opposing them. The command of the front decided to use the active actions of these troops to cut off the advancing German tanks from the motorized infantry and rear, and then to destroy them separately at the turn of the river. Aksai.

For this purpose, a strike group of the 51st Army was created, which included the 4th Mechanized Corps (transferred from the 5th Shock Army) and the 13th Tank Corps, the 235th Flamethrower Tank Brigade, the 234th Separate Tank regiment and the 1378th rifle regiment of the 87th rifle division (also from the 5th shock army). This group of troops was ordered to strike at

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in the general direction to Chilekov (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 451, d. 125, l. 47).

Describing the state of the 4th mechanized corps, Eremenko wrote:

"On December 13, all units of the 4th mechanized corps, after they were relieved by the 300th rifle division, were on the march; by this time, the corps had been in continuous battles for more than 20 days and had losses

more than 60% of the personnel and materiel. He had 42 tanks and 2,000 men left. Also, the second day the 87th Rifle Division moved from behind the Volga, approaching the head regiment in the Kapkinsky area. At the same time, tank and artillery reserves approached Gromoslavka. The troops included representatives of the front headquarters, who were sent there immediately after we decided to create a grouping to fend off the threat from Kotelnikovo. Their main task was to contribute with all their might to accelerating the rate of concentration and advance of troops.

On the morning of December 14, these units, having received their tasks on the march, boldly rushed towards the enemy, inflicting a counterattack on Verkhne-Kumsky. A fire howl oncoming battle of mechanized units ensued. The settlement was attacked by the 4th mechanized corps from two directions: from one it broke into the settlement, and from the other it covered it from the right. At the same time, from the Gromoslavka area, the 235th tank brigade, with a separate tank regiment subordinate to it, surrounded this point from the east. The 20th Anti-Tank Artillery Brigade with the 1378th Infantry Regiment of the 87th Infantry Division arrived in time (the rest of the units, which had been delayed at the crossings across the Volga, were on the way) deployed to the left (eastward) of the 235th Tank Brigade at the level of Upper -Kumsky and stopped the advance of the enemy group, which struck east of Verkhne-Kumsky. As a result of a swift counterattack, the advanced units of the enemy were semi-encircled and suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment (up to 40 tanks and many motorized infantry).

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You). Under pressure from our units, the enemy left Verkhne-Kumsky and retreated to the line of the Aksai River (Yoremenco. - P. 403).

To alleviate the situation of the troops of the 51st Army, the 5th Shock Army (315th, 258th, 300th, 87th Rifle Divisions, 7th Tank and 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps), were ordered to move to attack on the Nizh not-Chirskaya. As a result of this, already from December 14, a much more powerful grouping, than the one that was there on December 12, should have stood in the way of the offensive of the enemy strike group.

In accordance with the task received, General N. I. Trufanov decided to pin down the enemy from the front with the forces of rifle divisions and artillery attached to them, and with mobile formations to strike at the flanks of the advancing group of Nazi troops, the 13th tank corps was ordered to move from the area of st. Aksai to the west and hit the right flank of the advancing enemy. The 4th mechanized corps with parts attached to it was supposed to



carry a blow on the left flank of the enemy troops (from the Dorofeevsky area to Vodyansky). To support the mobile troops, 100 fighters and attack aircraft of the 8th Air Army were allocated.

The planned action plan could not really lead to the destruction of the superior forces of the enemy, but it corresponded to the plan of the Supreme High Command - to delay and weaken the breakthrough to the encircled Stalingrad grouping of Manstein's troops at the intermediate lines and bleed them to the approach to the battlefield of the 2nd Guards Army .

As part of the fulfillment of the assigned tasks, on the morning of December 14, both opposing sides again proceeded to active operations. The enemy sought to develop success in the area of the Verkhne-Kumsky farm, which became the main center of the struggle. This was due to the location of the most convenient roads from south to north to Stalingrad, which forced the Nazis to persist in developing the offensive in this particular direction. Path

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German tanks from the north were blocked by the 1378th rifle, 234th tank regiments, the 235th flamethrower tank and the 20th separate fighter brigade. From the air, the advancing enemy was attacked by Soviet attack aircraft, operating in groups of 4-6 aircraft.

The 4th mechanized corps of General V. T. Volsky, which advanced to meet the advancing German troops, started fighting in the area of Verkhne-Kumsky and Vodyansky. The 13th Panzer Corps came close to the enemy in the area of the Biryukovskiy siding and, having entered the battle, pulled back part of the forces of the 23rd Panzer Division. Throughout the day, the 51st Army fought heavy battles with the advancing Manstein-Gotha grouping of troops. H. Scheibert writes that December 14, 1942 was the day "the start of a tank battle that lasted three days in the Kalmyk steppes, one of the largest and fiercest tank battles of the Second World War."

On the same day, the troops of the 5th shock army went on the offensive against the enemy, who was operating in the Rychkovsky, Verkhne-Chirsky area. After a stubborn battle, the 7th Tank Corps of Major General P. A. Rotmistrov, the 258th and 4th Guards Rifle Divisions drove the Nazis back from the bridgehead, which eased the position of the 51st Army in the Kotelnikovsky direction.

Regarding this day, A. M. Vasilevsky writes:

"On December 14, at 10:30 p.m., we received an official directive to temporarily postpone the implementation of Operation Ring, and to move the 2nd Guards Army to the south. ... The general idea of \u200b\u200brepelling the troops of Man-

Stein was formulated in the directive as follows: the main task of our southern troops is to defeat the Kotelnikovskaya group of the enemy with the forces of Trufanov (51st Army) and R. Ya. Malinovsky, occupy Kotelnikovo within the next few days and firmly gain a foothold there.

... On the night of December 14, another very important decision of the Stavka followed: to change the direction of the main attack of the South-Western and left wing of the Voronezh fronts. If, according to the plan of Operation Saturn, it was planned directly to the south, through Millerovo to Rostov, in the rear of the entire

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enemy grouping on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, it was now decided, after the defeat of the Italian army on the middle reaches of the Don, to direct the strike to the southeast, towards Morozovsk and Tormosin, that is, to the rear of Manstein's deblocking grouping "(Vasilevsky A. M. The work of a lifetime, pp. 220-221).

December 15

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our units repulsed four enemy counterattacks that followed one after another. The Germans met with heavy fire each time were forced to roll back without reaching the Soviet positions. Up to 300 enemy corpses and 5 burnt tanks remained on the battlefield. In another section, our units led to offensive battles and occupied one settlement. In the battle for this settlement, about 500 German soldiers and officers were destroyed. Our fighters captured 3 tanks, 30 guns, 40 machine guns, 200 rifles, 50 vehicles, 10 tractors and 6 warehouses with ammunition, food and clothing. 50 enemy soldiers were taken prisoner.

Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought with large enemy infantry and tanks. The N-th motorized unit repulsed several German infantry counterattacks during the day. Hundreds of enemy corpses and 9 burnt tanks remained on the battlefield. In another sector, our subunits, by strikes from the flanks, cut off a group of German infantry and tanks from the main enemy forces and are fighting to destroy it.

On December 15, the commander of the Stalingrad Front sent a telegram to the Headquarters with the following content:

"Due to the fact that all the reserves aimed at

southwest and grouped in the area of Plodovitoe, Zeta, the state farm Krep, have received their purpose (i.e., they have been used up), the Stalingrad Front now has no reserves. East of the line Ivanovka, Aksai no

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not a single person at all. If the enemy develops a strike along the railway to Abganerovo and from the Tsybenko area to the Zetas, then he will put the troops of the front in an extremely difficult position, since he will reach the extended rear areas that are already hard at work.

We have taken a number of measures: two divisions were taken from the 64th Army, albeit very weak ones, and moved to the Zeta area, the Abganerovo station in order to take up defense along the outer Stalingrad bypass until the reserves approach. At the same time, I report that the 126th and 302nd rifle divisions, which had been engaged in intense battles for three days, were very few in number; now the 4th and 13th mechs of the corps are fighting.

On December 14, near Verkhne-Kumsky, about 90 tanks participated in the oncoming battle from each side. The 4th mechanized corps disabled 40 enemy tanks, losing 32 tanks.

The same losses in the 13th mechanized corps. The situation is very tense. I ask you to immediately send at my disposal one mechanized corps to the Zeta region, as well as one tank corps and two rifle corps to the Lyapichev, Buzinovka, Krep state farm with the task of delivering a strike from the Shabalinsky, Gromoslavka to Kotelnikovo area "(Eremenko. - P. 403) .

On this day, the 4th mechanized corps with reinforcement units fought for the Verkhne-Kumsky farm. "I remember this battle as if it were quite recently," says Major General (at that time a lieutenant) A.P. Kurkov. - My tank platoon was tasked, acting as a combat guard, to advance up to 1000 meters ahead of the main forces of the regiment, disguise themselves in the weeds and monitor the advance of the enemy. By 14.00 between Verkhne-Kumsky and the collective farm. On March 8, one column of tanks appeared, then two more - up to 50-60 tanks in total. In my platoon there were three T-70 tanks and in the main forces of the regiment - 15 tanks.

Enemy tanks, outflanking the main forces of the corps, fired at the infantry, which lay to the left. One of the columns of enemy tanks was moving directly towards our

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platoon. At that time, my tank's radio station failed,

Iya could not receive any instructions from either the company commander or the regiment commander. I warned the commanders of the vehicles not to open fire until I opened it myself. The German tanks were already at 800-1000 m. The Nazis noticed shocks and, obviously suspecting an ambush, opened fire on them with fragmentation shells. One shell exploded very close to my tank, and the explosion swept away all the disguise from the storms. Then I broke down and opened fire. From the very first shot you managed to knock out the lead tank. The commanders of other vehicles also opened fire, and soon two more non-friendly tanks were knocked out. Still, the forces were unequal, and I began to withdraw the platoon closer to the flank of the main forces of the regiment. The Nazis, carried away by the battle with my platoon, unexpectedly for them came under heavy fire from the flank of the main forces of our regiment. Having lost several tanks, the Nazis began to retreat. Then Lieutenant M. Tolstykh, on the orders of Aslanov, led his company into the attack. The tank regiment of Lieutenant Colonel A. A. Aslanov successfully completed the task and did not allow enemy tanks to break through their battle formations.

In the afternoon, with coordinated attacks on the advancing units of the 4th mechanized corps, the Nazis were driven out of the Verkhne-Kumsky farm and thrown from Kr. Aksai. The 1378th Rifle Regiment of the 87th Rifle Division also took part in these battles, which on December 15 arrived in the region of the Verkhne-Kumsky farm in a forced march.

At the same time, the commander of the Stalingrad front, trying to protect himself from any accidents, wrote to the Stavka: "Due to the fact that all the reserves of the front, which were previously aimed at the southwest and grouped in the Plodovitoe area, the Zetas received a different assignment and the front was left without reserves ... it is impossible to consider the direction along the railway Kotelnikovo, Abganerovo as sufficiently guaranteed" (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 451, d. 56, l. 278).

To reinforce the Stalingrad Front, the Headquarters

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the 6th mechanized corps was included in its composition, which was also planned to be used against the enemy's Kotelnikov grouping.

H. Scheibert, describing this battle, sadly notes:

"We were in a very bad mood ... Fury, depression, combined with doubts and nervousness, took possession of us." Citing an excerpt from the combat log of the 11th tank regiment, he writes: "By order of the division, the settlement (Verkhne-Kumsky. - A.S.) was evacuated. Günersdorf's group, under cover of darkness, withdrew south to replenish the fighting

supplies and fuel. This day cost the regiment heavy casualties.

December 16

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought enemy infantry and tanks. The fighters of the N-th unit repelled three German counterattacks, knocked out 4 tanks and destroyed more than 250 enemy soldiers and officers. In another section, our units fought offensive battles, moved forward and captured 10 vehicles, 6 anti-aircraft machine guns, 600 rifles, 20,000 shells, 15,000 cartridges and a food depot. Destroyed 2 German tanks, 2 anti-tank guns and > mortars. The enemy suffered heavy losses in manpower.

On December 16, both sides prepared to continue the fight and fought in separate areas. The enemy was regrouping his forces, trying to prevent the 5th shock army from reaching the Chir River on the right bank of the Don. In the zone of the 51st Army, he continued to hold a bridgehead north of the Aksai River and tried to capture the settlements of Kruglyakov and Kovalevka.

The troops of the Stalingrad Front, by stubborn defense, did not allow the enemy to reach the Myshkova River, ensuring the approach and deployment of the 2nd Guards Army, which on the night of December 17 was to finish the concentration

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the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps north of the Myshkov River, and by the morning of December 18, take up defenses at the line of Nizhne Kumsky, Gromoslavka, Ivanovka, Kapkinka with two rifle divisions.

On that day, the enemy concentrated his main efforts on the sector of the 2nd Guards Army in the area of Verkhne-Kumsky and in the area of Zhutov of the 1st - on the front of the 51st Army. The enemy still has not abandoned the plan to release the 6th Army. The most fierce fighting took place in the area of Verkh Ne-Kumsky. The advance of the 6th Panzer Division was supported by the 65th Panzer Battalion, armed with the new heavy Tiger tanks. In the area where the defense was occupied by the 1378th Rifle Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel M. S. Diasamidze, reinforced by the 1st Battalion of the 1058th Artillery Regiment, the enemy attacked throughout the day, but did not achieve success.

Eremenko writes:

"From the morning of December 16, our units, which achieved success in the battle of December 14-15, advanced south of Verkhne-Kumsky and organized anti-tank defense along the line south and southeast of this point. The Nazis, having put in order the main forces of the two tank divisions advancing in the first echelon, at 10 am on December 16, they again went on the offensive on Verkhne-Kumsky. A strong tank-artillery battle immediately flared up on the just-named line. Despite the fact that the enemy had a great advantage in forces, especially in tanks, the stubbornness of our troops, the unparalleled stamina and courage of the soldiers of the 4th mechanized corps, 235th tank brigade, 20th anti-tank artillery brigade, 55 th separate tank regiment, 1378th rifle regiment of the 87th rifle division did not allow the enemy to develop success. For six days, the fighting did not stop at this turn.

Verkhne-Kumsky changed hands several times. All parts in this unequal battle showed exceptional heroism; the 1378th Rifle Regiment stood out in particular (commander of the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel M.S.

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midze) and the 55th separate tank regiment (commander of the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel A. A. Aslanov).

The 235th Tank Brigade (commander Colonel D. M. Burdov) and the 20th Anti-tank Artillery Brigade (commander Major P. S. Zhelamsky) also distinguished themselves in these battles.

These units and formations, fighting to the last shell of the row, to the last bullet, withstood a stubborn six-day battle, but did not retreat a single step before the enemy. In the battles, they lost almost all of their materiel, which was broken or crushed. High heroism was shown by the personnel of the 20th brigade, although it suffered huge losses in people and materiel; delaying the advance of the enemy in his area, he inflicted great damage on the enemy, not giving him a single meter of the area occupied by him.

Very heavy fighting in the area of Kruglikov, Zhutovo was carried out by two brigades of the 13th Mechanized Corps (commander General Tanaschishin) and the completely weakened 302nd Rifle Division (commander Colonel Makarchuk) and the 126th Rifle Division (commander Colonel Sychev). Against them, the enemy launched a fresh airfield division into the offensive, a group of Colonel Pan Witz, supported by tanks and the Romanian army corps "(Yoremenko. - P. 405).

G. Derr also writes about the failure of the enemy offensive that day:

"On December 16, the attack of the tanks of the corps, which were part of the brig du Günersdorf, on Verkhne-Kumsky ended in failure. In Verkhne-Kumsky, they were surrounded by parts of the 6th Panzer Division. The attack was repulsed as a result of the massive use by the enemy of new, well-camouflaged anti-tank weapons.

General Goth, commanding the Kotelnikovskaya grouping and making a breakthrough to the encircled troops of Paulus, understood how important time was for the results of his strike. His calculations were therefore based on the rapid use of all his forces before the arrival of the Soviet reserves. This could be done

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only a rapid breakthrough of the encirclement by superior forces and a connection with the Stalingrad group. In accordance with the plan of operation approved by Manstein, the encircled grouping of Paulus was supposed to strike back when the troops of Goth approaching it approached at a distance of 30 km. Encountering stubborn resistance from the Soviet covering units 50 km from the target, the troops of the Kotelnikov group, prompted by the command, made desperate efforts, trying to crush the obstacle that stood in their way.

By the end of December 16, the enemy created a real threat of breaking through the defenses of the 51st Army by wedged into its operational formation to a depth of 35 kilometers.

December 17

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our units fought forward and occupied the enemy's fortified positions. The Germans lost up to 400 soldiers and officers killed and wounded. Many weapons abandoned by the Germans were picked up on the battlefield. In another sector, Soviet tankers pursued the enemy and destroyed 9 tanks, 11 anti-tank guns, 14 vehicles and more than a company of the Nazis. Captured trophies and prisoners."

Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, part of our troops continued offensive battles. Soviet tankers southeast of Surovikino destroyed 1,235 enemy soldiers and officers, knocked out 5 tanks, destroyed 30 guns, 12 wagons with goods, destroyed 52 dugouts and captured 70 Nazis. In another section, our soldiers repelled an attack by German motorized infantry, supported by 30 tanks.

As a result of the battle, 7 tanks were knocked out and 14 enemy vehicles were burned.

From that day on, the 2nd Guards Army was subordinated to the 4th Mechanized, 4th Cavalry Corps and

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87th Infantry Division, which fought south of the Myshkov River. The 51st Army was given the task of continuing the defense of the occupied line by using formations of the right flank, in cooperation with these troops, to provide cover for the exit of the main forces of the 2nd Guards Army to the line of the Myshkov River. The Fifth Shock Army was ordered to prepare for an offensive in the Nizhne Chirskaya area with the task of crushing the opposing

Nika.

On the morning of December 17, the enemy resumed the attack on Verkhne-Kumsky. The 6th, 17th (completely concentrated in the battle area) and 23rd Panzer Divisions, supported by infantry formations, acted as the main striking force of the Gota grouping. German tanks and motorized infantry, accompanied by aircraft, furiously attacked, trying to overcome the distance between the Aksai and Myshkova rivers, tributaries of the Don. The flat steppe terrain, cut by deep hollows and ravines, was covered with deep snow. The tension of the battle grew with every passing hour.

"Together with units of the 23rd Panzer Division," Scheibert says, "we attacked to the north so that, bypassing Zagotskot, we would again capture Verkhne-Kumsky. At the same time, motorized infantry units began to move from Zalivskoye for the same purpose, they were accompanied by self-propelled guns transferred to us by this time.

However, the tanks of the 23rd division failed to take Zagot cattle. Parts of the 6th Panzer Division initially managed to move forward, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the Soviet soldiers. "The position in front of us was well prepared," writes Scheibert, "narrow and deep trenches were defended by a very staunch enemy. No one gave up, although our whole battalion went to this line and wedged between the rifle cells. The enemy was forced to overcome the stubborn resistance of the Soviet soldiers. The Nazis moved forward to the north, but were met with heavy fire.

About the further events of this day, Scheibert tells the following:

"Nevertheless, we approached Verkhne-Kumsky in due time, and the second duel began. But the defense system on the outskirts of the village delayed the breakthrough, besides



On the other hand, despite the preliminary processing of the area by dive bombers, the fire of the defenders was too strong. Enemy tanks appearing on the left flank forced us to move north.

It was getting dark when we reached the battlefield we had abandoned on December 15th. Our burnt tanks were still there. But we couldn't tow them. The Russians made an attempt to cut off our escape route. They acted very skillfully that day. And we, under the threat of envelopment, were forced to retreat under the cover of darkness.

Guided by tracer bullets, we withdrew to the south, meeting the motorized infantry of our division halfway. The whole enterprise was a blow to nothing."

In repulsing the Nazi attacks in the Verkhne-Kumsky region, the tankers of the 55th separate tank regiment, Lieutenant Colonel A. A. Aslanov, especially distinguished themselves. Throughout the day, they successfully repulsed enemy attacks with short and quick blows. The tank crews under the command of lieutenants I.N. Ilyin, Fedorov, junior lieutenant Pashkin and others acted exceptionally skillfully and importantly.

The gun crews of the artillery battalion of the 59th Mechanized Brigade and the 383rd Anti-tank Artillery Regiment let the German tanks in close range and shot them with direct fire. The 360th Mechanized Brigade and the 1378th Rifle Regiment on December 7 also repulsed a number of fierce frontal attacks by enemy tanks and motorized infantry, which were carried out in the area of the Kolkhoz named after March 8 and heights 130.1, 137.2. The Nazis failed to capture Verkhne-Kumsky this time either.

The soldiers of the 20th separate anti-tank artillery brigade under the command of Major P. S. Zhelamsky, who on the night of December 16-17 took up defense at an altitude of 146.9, in front of the village of Gromoslavka, showed great stamina and heroism. During the attack

German tanks, using the folds of the terrain, went into the flank and partly into the rear of the battle formations of the battalions. "The tanks opened heavy fire, the Nazi infantry scribbled from machine guns. The battle went on to the entire depth of our defense, - writes in his memoirs Colonel V. M. Bubnov, the former head of the political department of the brigade. - Armor-piercers fought to the last bullet, to the last grenade. They beat and burned the tanks, armored vehicles of the enemy, beat the enemy infantry. But the enemy gave us everything, his tanks and armored cars approached our trenches, and then they began to "iron" them. But as soon as the tank passed through the trench, our soldiers - soldiers, sergeants and officers - got up and opened fire after the armored vehicles. By 3 p.m. on December 17, the brigade had suffered heavy losses. The surviving units and subunits withdrew from Hill 146.9 to a new position.

On this day, fierce battles were also fought in other sectors of the enemy offensive. Parts of the 13th Panzer Corps, Major General of the Panzer Troops T. I. Tanaschishin, held the area immediately west of Kruglyakov. Despite significant losses, the 4th Cavalry Corps continued to fight. Rifle formations also delivered blows to the enemy.

"On December 17," writes G. Derr, "an extremely critical situation arose. Early in the morning, the troops defending the bridgehead at Kruglyakov were attacked from the east by the freshly replenished 87th Russian Rifle Division and a tank brigade. The wedged enemy was driven back only with the support of the 6th Panzer Division and aviation.

Shortly thereafter, the Günersdorf brigade, which was just supposed to come out to deliver a decisive blow to enemy tanks in the Verkhne-Kumsky region, had to turn part of its forces to fight 40 enemy tanks that had broken through from the north to Shestakov. After the enemy was pushed back to the northeast, the offensive of the tank brigade began on Upper Kumsky. But this offensive also ended in failure due to the well-organized anti-tank defense;

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having suffered heavy losses, the brigade retreated back "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 94).

On December 17, the troops of the 2nd Guards Army, with the help of two divisions and one mechanized corps, were just beginning to concentrate on the defensive line. At 24:00, by order of the Commander of the Stalingrad Front, the 87th Rifle Division, the 4th Cavalry Corps and the 4th Mechanized Corps, with all reinforcements, were subordinated to the Commander of the 2nd Guards Army. "The troops of the 2nd Guards Army were tasked with defeating the enemy's Kotelnikov grouping on the approaches to the outer fortified bypass of Stalingrad, having the immediate task of reaching the Aksai River." The same order established demarcation lines for the 2nd Guards Army and its neighbors: on the right - the 5th shock army and on the left - the 51st army. The neighbor on the right was asked to pay attention to the strong defense of the eastern bank of the river. Don at the Nizhne-Chirskaya, Suvorovsky section. The neighbor on the left - the 51st Army - was asked to hold the occupied line and, on the right flank, to assist the 2nd Guards Army in defeating the enemy's Kotelnikov grouping by crossing the Aksai River. However, the moment for solving this problem has not yet come.

December 18

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, part of our troops fought offensive battles. The N part captured the fortified stronghold of the Nemians. In another sector, the Soviet soldiers beat off two counterattacks of the Nazis. 250 enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed, \$ German tanks were burned and knocked out. Captured 12 machine guns, a lot of rifles and ammunition.

Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought fierce battles with enemy tanks and infantry. The enemy infantry, with the support of tanks, managed to occupy one settlement. Regrouping our forces, our units delivered a counterattack to the Germans and drove them out of the settlement. Hundreds of enemy corpses and 7 burnt tanks remained on the battlefield. In another area, artillerymen under the command of Lieutenant Chepelko knocked out 7 German tanks. In the same battle, Senior Lieutenant Koshchevenko disabled 6 tanks from an anti-tank rifle against

Nika".

On December 18, the enemy launched the 17th Panzer Division, which had been brought up to the battle area, into the offensive. Having crossed the Aksai River in its lower course, in the area of Generalovsky, this division advanced to the collective farm named after. March 8, 7 km west of Verkhne-Kumsky. The Germans suddenly burst into this settlement, where the headquarters was located,

Literary department and medical unit of the 36th mechanized brigade of the 4th mechanized corps. Tanks rushed through the streets, firing. Enemy aircraft also flew in. The personnel of the headquarters units, who did not expect an attack, found themselves in a critical situation. A situation was created that threatened panic and the death of everyone who was in the settlement. But this did not happen. Brigade commander Major N. A. Doroshkevich, jumping into the tank, organized a center of defense. Its other center arose near the artillery battalion. The enemy's plan was thwarted, but the settlement had to be abandoned. In the evening the enemy was knocked out from there. On the streets, among many others, the body of the head of the political department of the brigade, M.F. Mishurov, was also found. Before the war, he was a party worker - secretary of the RKVKP (b) in the regional centers of the Smolensk region, in the city of Vyazma.

Brigade veteran O. V. Machikin, who lives in Lipetsk, was one of the participants in those events. M. F. Mishurov died, he wrote to his widow, at the moment when

tried to organize resistance in the village of the collective farm. March 8. Together with him, N. G. Tsygankov (senior instructor of the political department) and the deputy commander of the artillery division, Captain S. E. Aivazov, perished.

On the morning of the same day, the 6th Panzer Division resumed its attack on Verkhne-Kumsky. Attacks by German tanks and motorized infantry were supported by massed assault and bomber strikes. Enemy tanks and motorized infantry launched a frontal attack on the farm. The enemy's blow was directed to the line, which all these days was heroically held by the 1378th Infantry Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel M. S. Diasamidze. The Nazis rushed here, and the Soviet infantrymen threw them back three times. Diasamidze led the battle with great skill and firmness; confident in the courage of his soldiers and officers, he, in turn, gave them an example of an unshakable will to win. When there was an immediate threat to the command post of the regiment, Diasamidze ordered the commander

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headquarters to Captain Bykov to go to the reserve command post, and he himself remained in the dugout, continuing to control the battle.

Units of the 382nd anti-tank artillery regiment and all other units and units of the 4th mechanized corps staunchly repelled enemy attacks.

On this day of fierce struggle against the enemy, the formation of General Volsky with reinforcement units continued to steadfastly repel enemy attacks. Stubborn battles went on behind the mounds in front of the Verkhne-Kumsky farm.

A vivid episode of the heroic resistance of the Soviet troops was the feat of 24 soldiers defending height 137.2. The rifle company of the 3rd battalion of the 1378th rifle regiment under the command of Senior Lieutenant N.P. Naumov, together with a platoon of anti-tank rifles that joined it at night, repelled one German attack after another. In this battle, the heroic warriors destroyed 18 tanks and many enemy soldiers and officers. Only in the second half of the day did the Germans succeed in capturing the height [37.2. Heroes died the death of the brave.

By the end of December 18, with a blow from A. A. Aslanov's tank regiment and M. S. Diasamidze's reserve unit, the enemy that had broken through was driven back, and the defense at a height of 137.2 was restored.

The Nazis tried to strike at Verkhne-Kumsky and from the rear, bypassing the right flank of the combat formations of the corps of V. T. Volsky. But everywhere they met resistance. When attacking the positions of the 4th mechanized corps at the junction of the 1378th rifle and 55th separate tank

regiments, German tanks were met by armor-piercers of a separate company of anti-tank rifles of the 59th mechanized brigade. Once again a stubborn and fierce battle ensued.

The next morning, the commissar of the corps headquarters, Major A.S. Mayorov, was on the battlefield, and before him a picture of a heroic battle between armor-piercers and fascist tanks arose. Two wrecked enemy tanks stood still, while their engines continued to work. Nearby lay the corpses of Nazi tankmen.

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Among the dead Soviet soldiers, Mayorov saw one armor-piercer, riddled with bullets from a tank machine gun: a soldier was lying tightly clutching an anti-tank rifle in his hands, the barrel of which was pointed towards the wrecked tank; dying, he did not feel defeated.

Not far from the armor-piercer, some two meters away from him, Mayorov saw the corpse of a Soviet orderly. From the bloody trail, from the crumpled grass, it was clear that, already exhausted, bleeding, he was crawling forward, trying to help the wounded warrior.

Another corpse of an armor-piercer lay between the torn caterpillars of a tank with a running engine... The entire battlefield was black from fire and shell explosions.

On the evening of December 18, a radiogram came from the headquarters of the front addressed to General V.T. The 4th Mechanized Corps was transformed into the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps. The political department of the corps, summing up the results of the past day, reported in its report to the head of the political department of the 2nd Guards Army and to the political department of the Stalingrad Front: "The personnel of the corps are ready to repel fierce attacks on the advancing enemy at any cost."

The fascist German troops, reinforced by the 17th Panzer Division, continued to break through in a northern direction. "The 6th Panzer Division," writes G. Derr, "was slowly moving forward towards the southeastern outskirts of Verkhne-Kumsky; however, on this day, it was not possible to master it. The path to Stalingrad was closed for Manstein's troops.

About the battles in the area of the Verkhne-Kumsky farm, V.S. Krysov in the book "Battery, fire!" writes:

"The 4th Panzer Army of Goth advanced along the following route: the Verkhne-Kumsky farm, then across the Aksai Esaulovsky River and towards the Myshkova River. In a day she overcame

about forty kilometers, crossed the Aksai Esaulovsky river, a tributary of the Don, and reached the Verkhne-Kum farm

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sky. It remained to go another fifty kilometers, and they would have reached the river Myshkova. Our troops were not there, and Stalingrad was within easy reach! Stalin ordered General Malinovsky's 2nd Guards Army to take up defensive positions on the Myshkova River. But the 2nd Army was 180 kilometers from the river, it took time to overcome this considerable distance on foot and even off-road.

The Germans no longer doubted a quick exit to Myshkovo and the release of Paulus's army. But in the village of Verkhne-Kumsky they were met by the 51st Army of General Trufanov, assembled by Vasilevsky and Eremenko from a pine forest from different units and formations. The main striking force of this army was the 4th mechanized corps of General Volsky, which united the remnants of the tank brigades. In total, there were about a hundred tanks, 147 guns and mortars, and 34 thousand infantrymen ...

A fierce battle has begun! For six days we fought, not letting Goth's army go to Myshkovo! The Verkhne-Kumsky farm changed hands several times. They fought without sleep and rest, one might say - and without food. A field medical battalion of the corps was deployed behind the farmstead in the barn, the wounded were sent there, but the wounded did not leave their firing positions, they continued to fight - they did not leave under orders!

In this unequal battle, Commander General Vasily Timofeevich Volsky showed himself to be a talented commander. From his meager resources, he contrived to separate 30 tanks, a regiment of riflemen, and sent us behind Aksai Esaulovsky, to the rear of the Germans, in order to create the appearance of encirclement and force the enemy to take up all-round defense. This grouping partially included tanks of our 158th brigade, its brigade commander, Colonel Yegorov, led the landing behind enemy lines.

There, across the river, we first dug trenches for tanks, and the infantrymen dug cracks, fleeing from bullets, shrapnel and icy piercing wind. The Aksay Esaulovsky River is small in width, only 25 meters, so we constantly terrorized the enemy with fire

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from cannons and machine guns, and infantrymen from machine guns and RIFLES.

For six days of fighting, the group destroyed 32 enemy

tank, losing 15 of their thirty. And this despite the fact that each shell had to be counted - they saved as much as they could, knowing that they could not count on delivery. With food it was even worse, they ate crackers, washed down with cold water. On December 17, the last ammunition was used up, there was nothing to fight with. The brigade commander Yegorov gathered the officers:

- I express my gratitude to all the crews for the fighting. The task set by the grouping has been accomplished: the advance of the enemy has been halted. The enemy did not dare to move on Myshkova, believing that we would hit him from the rear. Let's remember our dead comrades... - The colonel and all of us bared our heads. - Tonight at night, - continued the brigade commander, - we will go out to our own. We force Aksai along the enemy's pontoons. The usual "language" showed that the Germans did not remove the crossing, as they were waiting for the approach of the last battalion of the tank DIVISION.

Waiting for darkness, we moved to the crossing. Marder and I covered the retreat with two tanks. We were the last to reach the pontoons and had already crossed the dangerous lane, when strong gunfire hit us in the back. I managed to say to Misha on the radio:

- We're on fire!

And heard in response:

We are on fire too!

It was the tank battalion of the 17th division approaching Goth! And we stumbled upon it! They saw us and opened fire with sub-caliber shells from a short distance! The Germans already had sub-caliber shells in the forty-first year, and they appeared with us only in the forty-third, before the Battle of Kursk.

The Germans managed to set fire to both of our tanks with a hit in the stern. Our projectile hit the transmission, the engine caught fire. The crossing and the shore were immediately illuminated by rockets! Heavy fire! You can't jump through the tower

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will mow everyone! They slipped out, opening an escape hatch - a manhole hatch in the middle of the fighting compartment, taking the most necessary things, machine guns, disks, grenades, removed the machine gun, took away the first-aid kit, camouflage suits - and lay down under the tank. In my crew, everyone remained alive, not even injured. But what about Michael? In the light of the rockets, I saw Marder's crew getting out of the tank, also through the escape hatch, which means that people are alive there too. Hiding, we waited: when will they get tired of launching rockets?! Soon a group of enemy scouts showed up. We sank into the ground. But the Germans, without stopping, passed by. On the-

everything calmed down at the end. Creeped out with Marder's crew. Misha said that he heard the scouts say: "Ten Ivans burned down."

However, A. M. Vasilevsky writes that even at that time the Headquarters still doubted the need to strengthen the troops of the Stalingrad Front operating in the Kotelnikov direction. He's writing:

"On December 18, I sent a report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, in which I reported on the situation in the Kotelnikovskiy and Nizhnechirskiy directions and outlined proposals for using the 2nd Guards Army against the enemy's Kotelnikovskiy grouping. R. Ya. Malinovsky worked with me on these proposals. We also coordinated them with the commander of the Stalingrad Front, A. I. Eremenko."

But I. V. Stalin and his inner circle, apparently, still doubted the need for this. According to the positive response was received only about 1 o'clock in the morning of the next day (Vasilevsky A. M. The matter of a lifetime. - S. 223-224).

December 19th

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau.

Morning summary:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops repulsed the attacks of enemy infantry and tanks. In one sector, as a result of fierce fighting, our units inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and forced him to withdraw. Ost enemy

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there were many corpses on the battlefield. 17 guns, 63 vehicles and 14 enemy machine guns were destroyed.

Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought with enemy tanks and infantry. In one area, the Germans managed to push our units. With a blow from the flanks, the Soviet soldiers surrounded the enemy group and in a fierce battle destroyed 40 tanks and several hundred German machine gunners. In another section, the N-th unit destroyed 3 enemy tanks, 9 machine guns, 14 vehicles and 2 mortars. Up to 200 killed soldiers and officers of the enemy remained on the battlefield.

The struggle between the borders of the Aksai and Myshkov rivers continued with great tension. Hitler's command concentrated on this narrow section of the front



about 300 tanks. On December 19, the enemy resumed the offensive, which was preceded by strong artillery and air preparation, the 17th tank division of the enemy in the morning occupied the heights northwest of Verkhne Kumskiye. At the same time, the 6th Panzer Division, regardless of losses, stubbornly advanced on the farm, enveloping it from several sides. About 70 tanks and up to the regiment's infantry struck from the border of the collective farm. March 8 in the direction of the western outskirts of Verkhne-Kumsky. The enemy delivered the second blow with the forces of 60 tanks and a motorized regiment from the southern slopes of heights 147.0 and 130.6, bypassing Verkhne-Kumsky from the east, and by the actions of the infantry regiment and 20-40 tanks tried to tie down the center of defense of the 1378th rifle regiment at the turn of the heights 132.7, 143.7 and 147.0.

From 07:00 to 15:30, the guards withstood five furious enemy attacks. The situation has become exceptionally acute. Separate groups of enemy tanks reached the Nizhne-Kumsky and Chernomorov regions. The 59th and 60th brigades were in a semicircle, the enemy tanks broke through to the rear of the corps' battle formations. General V. T. Volsky decided to order the brigades to leave the settlements of Verkhne-Kumsky and the collective farm named after March 8 and begin retreat to a new line of defense.

By evening, units of the 4th Mechanized Corps began to concentrate on the Chernomorov-Chapura-Gromoslavka line. They retreated with a fight, holding back the onslaught of the enemy. Separate groups of soldiers and commanders continued to arrive at night. On the night of December 19-20, the 1378th Rifle Regiment broke out of encirclement, its units withdrew to the Gromoslavka area.

The 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps (formerly the 4th Mechanized Corps) fulfilled the task entrusted to it with honor. The soldiers of the 87th Rifle Division, the 20th Separate Anti-Tank Artillery Brigade and formations of the 51st Army also fought heroically. The courage and steadfastness of the Soviet troops in the battles at the turn of the river. Aksai played a major role.

By this time, 150 echelons of the 2nd Guards Army had arrived in the Stalingrad area and unloaded. Its formations took up defense on the northern bank of the Myshkova River: the 98th Rifle Division of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps - in the Nizhne-Kumsky, Ivanovka sector, the 3rd Guards Rifle Division of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps - in the Ivanovka, Kaplinka sector, height with a mark of 104.0. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was concentrated in the rear of these divisions.

Army formations came here after a 180-kilometer march made in severe weather. In addition, part of the equipment was still on the way, and there was not enough ammunition. Despite the fatigue of the personnel, the advanced units immediately entered into battle with the enemy.

The fascist German command did not want to put up with the obvious failure of the deblocking strike. Therefore, in the next four days (from December 20 to 23), the enemy tried to overcome the resistance of the Soviet troops at the turn of the river. Myshkov and get through to the connection with the Paulus group. At that time, there were twelve divisions in the Goth army group, including three tank divisions, the 17th tank division was supposed to cross to the northern bank of the Myshkov River in the Gromoslavka area, the 6th tank division - in the Vasilyevka area, 23rd Panzer Division - to advance on the front of Cap Kinka, Kruglyakov.

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20th of December

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau.

#### Morning summary:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, Soviet troops repelled counterattacks by enemy tanks and infantry. Parts of the H connection in a fierce battle burned and knocked out 8 German tanks, destroyed 11 guns and 26 vehicles. In another section, one settlement changed hands several times during the day. By the end of the day, our fighters drove the Germans out of this settlement, destroying up to 300 enemy soldiers and officers.

#### Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought fierce battles with enemy tanks and motorized infantry. The Germans are making desperate efforts to break through the Soviet defense lines, but they are met with stubborn resistance from our units. In the area of one collective farm, the Nazis launched eight counterattacks and were forced to retreat with heavy losses for them. In these battles, 1500 German soldiers and officers, 24 tanks, 60 vehicles, 14 guns were destroyed. In another sector, the enemy attacked our positions with motorized infantry supported by 60 tanks. As a result of the battle, 16 German tanks were knocked out and burned.

On December 20, German tanks and infantry attacked in the northern and northeastern directions. The battles went for Nizhne-Kumsky, Vasilevka, Chernomorov, Gromoslavka, Kapinka. The 2nd Guards Army firmly held the occupied line, continuing to concentrate suitable units.

Some idea of these battles, from the side of the enemy, is given by Scheibert's account of the actions of the 6th Panzer Division. He writes that after the capture of Verkhne-Kumsky, the German tankers were encouraged by the success and hoped that they would soon connect with ok-

armed troops. The Günersdorf battle group immediately rushed to the river located at the turn. Myshkov village Vasilievka. "After a night march with detours, amounting to over 30 km ... the goal was achieved. Bridge

was captured intact. This march was appreciated by the highest authorities. The hope of reaching Stalingrad and liberating the encircled was further strengthened. Only 48 km separated the Günersdorf battle group from the encircled army.

The forward units of other formations of Goth's troops broke through to the Myshkova River. A difficult struggle was going on in the bridgeheads captured by the enemy. Despite the fact that in previous battles the enemy grouping suffered heavy losses in people and military equipment, it still represented a rather impressive force.

An entry appeared in the combat log of the 11th Panzer Regiment of the 6th Panzer Division:

"Vasilyevka, December 20, 1942: The gradually increasing resistance of the Russians became stronger and stronger during the night. Their own forces were weak, 21 tanks without fuel and two weak companies of motorized infantry in armored personnel carriers - not enough to expand the bridgehead and make further advance possible. Therefore, the order was given to take up a circular defense on the northern coast. Under ever-increasing pressure from the enemy, under the fire of his infantry, artillery and mortars, they still managed to beat off numerous attacks and hold the bridgehead in the hope that reinforcements from the Zollenkopf group would arrive the next day.

At 04:30, the first strong enemy attack was beaten off... Crews of destroyed tanks are used to reinforce the motorized infantry. At 1645 hours the first company from the Gauschild battalion approached, but with a small number of people. Until 7 pm, only two platoons appeared on the bridgehead ... Therefore, the enemy's penetration into the northwestern part of the bridgehead has not yet been eliminated ... The complete absence of water is very hard to endure, especially for the wounded. Since yesterday noon, 25 tanks have been out of action, partly for technical reasons, but mainly due to battle damage. The 1st battalion has only 7 tanks...

At the end of the day, the Zollenkopf group filled the bridgehead, but still failed to push back the small but stubborn enemy from the southern outskirts of the village ...

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Parts of the 23rd Panzer Division - to the right of the 6th Division at the line of Birzovaya, to the left, the 17th Panzer Division advances on Gromoslavka, which has not yet reached the line of the Myshkov River.

The main task was to clear part of Vasilievka on the southern bank. The Russians settled in the houses here, creating a well-developed defense system between them. This enemy, as well as the one located on the elevated northern coast, has so far managed to prevent the delivery of materials and human reinforcements to the bridgehead in armored personnel carriers. Being on the northern heights on both sides of the village, the Russians dominated and with their shelling, especially from anti-tank guns, controlled the southern coast. On the south coast, in open space, it was almost impossible to find good positions for artillery.

21 December

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning summary:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, the fighters of the N-th unit destroyed up to a battalion of enemy infantry and 15 vehicles. In another section, our units beat off the enemy counterattack. As a result of the battle, 8 German tanks were knocked out and burned, 2 self-propelled guns, 20 vehicles and 00,300 Nazis were destroyed.

Evening message:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought fierce battles with large forces of tanks and motorized infantry of the enemy. Throughout the day, a stubborn battle went on in the area of one collective farm. At the cost of huge losses, the Germans managed to somewhat push our units and take over the collective farm. As a result of this battle, 17 enemy tanks and over 700 Nazis were destroyed.

On this day, the defensive battles of the Soviet troops at the turn of the Myshkova River continued.

On this day, the enemy dealt the main blow to the | th Guards Rifle Corps and the 3rd Guards

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rifle division of the 2nd Guards Army and on the right flank of the 51st Army. Intense battles with enemy tanks unfolded in the area from Gromoslavka to Kapkinskaya.

The fighting was exceptionally stubborn in the defensive sectors of the 98th, 24th, and 3rd Guards Rifle Divisions. The Germans subjected the defense area of the 98th Rifle Division to particularly brutal air bombardment and opened heavy artillery fire. Everything seemed to be

here will be destroyed. But the enemy's attempts to break through the defenses of the Soviet troops in this place ended in failure. Thus, the 9th Guards Rifle Regiment, which was defending in the Kapkinskaya area (commander Colonel P.F. Statsura), defended its positions, destroying up to 500 enemy soldiers and officers and knocking out up to 20 enemy tanks (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4033, d 22, sheet 136).

In the area of the village of Vasilievka, the deputy commander of the 114th Guards Rifle Regiment, Major I.K. Khvostenko, after completing the next attack of the enemy, taking advantage of the early darkness, with a group of scouts along the ravine, quietly crept up to Vasilievka and threw grenades at the enemy. In this battle, up to 20 people were destroyed, several prisoners and important documents were captured. The scouts themselves returned to their positions without loss.

"The troops of the 2nd Guards Army," according to the Journal of Combat Operations of the 2nd Guards Army, "hold back the enemy with stubborn defense at the line of Gromoslavka, Ivanovka, Vasilyevka, Kapkinka. The enemy is trying to drive our troops out of Gromoslavka. 18 bombers are systematically processing the village, and at 14.30 the enemy, with a force of up to 40 tanks, attacked the southern outskirts of Gromoslavka, lost 9 tanks burned and rolled back to their original positions.

The 98th Rifle Division of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps and the 20th Separate Anti-Tank Artillery Brigade stubbornly defended Gromo Slavka.

The Nazis held the bridgehead at Vasilievka. gyu

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nersdorf received an order to continue the offensive, but could not carry it out. The fight dragged on.

"... The Russians failed to eliminate the bridgehead, and the 6th division to concentrate forces on it for a further offensive," he wrote later. - Over 100 km passed the division as part of the 57th Panzer Corps, overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy, 48 km separated its advanced units from Stalingrad, three-quarters of the way was covered. It was completely incomprehensible why they did not meet us halfway. 200 thousand soldiers could break through 50 km. There were more than enough rumors about this. Some said that they knew for sure that the 6th Army had already set out, others claimed that its personnel had already been withdrawn from Stalingrad and that communication had already been established between the encircled and the deblockers somewhere in the neighboring sector, still others claimed that a long bypass road through the steppes, along which the supply of the 6th Army has long been carried out. The only truthful report was that the 4th Panzer Army in the Ko-

Telnikova had everything necessary for the immediate reinforcement of the 6th Army, if a corridor had been broken through to it.

By the end of December 21, the enemy, having introduced additional forces, held a bridgehead on the northern bank of the Myshkov River in the areas of Nizhne-Kumsky, Vasilyevka and Kapkinsky. However, his attempts to expand the bridgehead ended in failure. The 17th and 6th Panzer Divisions were also unable to transport their main forces. The 23rd Panzer Division was stopped northeast of Kruglyakov.

At the end of the day, the commander of the army group, General Hoth, decided on December 22 to concentrate the main forces of the 57th Panzer Corps to attack from the Vasilyevka region to the north. To this end, it was decided to bring up the 17th Panzer Division from the Nizhne-Kumsky region at night and concentrate it behind the 6th Panzer Division.

At this time, the commander of the 2nd Guards Army decided, in cooperation with the troops of the right flank

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51st Army to liquidate the enemy bridgehead on the northern bank of the Myshkov River and restore the front edge of the army's defensive zone. The 1st Guards Rifle Corps was ordered to counterattack divisions of the first echelon to clear the northern bank of the Myshkov River from the enemy in the entire zone. The commander of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps was ordered to move the 49th Guards Rifle Division from the second echelon to restore the situation in the Vasilievka area. At the same time, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was supposed to prepare a counterattack in the direction of Vasilyevka, Kapkinsky by the morning of December 22.

December 22

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning summary:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought with enemy tanks and motorized infantry. In the area of one railroad junction, the German infantry, supported by 35 tanks, tried to attack our positions. The fighters of the North part of the counterstrike threw back the Nazis. 6 wrecked tanks and up to 200 corpses of enemy soldiers and officers remained on the battlefield. Lieutenant Alekseev, in an armored car, went out on reconnaissance in a nearby area and met an enemy infantry column in a hollow. The Germans opened fire on the armored vehicle. Tov. Alekseev broke into the location

enemy and machine-gunned several dozen Nazis.

Evening messages:

Fierce fighting continued southwest of Stalingrad. Soviet troops hold back the onslaught of large enemy forces and inflict enormous damage on them.

On the morning of December 22, trying to develop the offensive, the enemy attacked formations of the 2nd Guards Army in the areas of Gromoslavka, Ivanovka, Vasilievka, Kapkinsky. Fierce fighting continued throughout the day.

Later, General Eremenko wrote: "If there is an eye on Aksai

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was sufficient for the defense of one battalion, then both motorized infantry regiments were involved in the battle. Therefore, the division was not able to create a strong enough grouping for further advance. Compared to Zalivsky, the situation at Vasilyevka was also different in that the regiments were then strong, and the enemy, battered by the tanks that had broken through into Verkhne-Kumsky, had weak forces. Here, too, the weakened 6th Panzer Division opposed a strong enemy, so the division's order to move forward immediately can only be explained by pressure from higher authorities. The enemy air strikes were stronger than on previous days."

By 12 o'clock, the Soviet units repulsed the enemy's attacks and you forced him to go on the defensive, and then you yourself carried out a number of counterattacks. As a result, by 2 p.m., the northern bank of the Myshkov River from Nizhne-Kumsky to Vasilievka was cleared of enemy units. However, the enemy continued to stubbornly hold Vasilyevka and Kapkinsky with the forces of the 6th and 17th Panzer Divisions. His tanks, taking up positions between the houses and firing from a place, inflicted serious losses on the attacking units of the 3rd and 49th Guards Rifles of the KOVA DIVISIONS.

All day long intense street fighting went on in Vasilievka and Kapkinskoe. At first, units of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps captured the western and northwestern outskirts of Vasilievka with a surprise attack. But at 5 p.m., a group of enemy infantry, supported by tanks and artillery, went over to the attack and after a 30-minute battle drove our units out of this settlement. At the same time, one of the battalions of the 13th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 3rd Guards Rifle Division was cut off from its troops and surrounded in Kapkinskoe. The encircled continued stubborn resistance, destroying up to 200 people and 8 enemy tanks (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4033, file 21, sheet 34).

Thus, as a result of the hostilities on December 22, the settlements of Ivanovka, Vasilievka and Kapkinsky remained in the hands of the enemy and the front line of defense in the zone [3rd Guards Rifle Corps

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sa has not been restored. The Army Group Gota, which broke through to the line of the Myshkov River, was 35-40 km from Paulus's troops surrounded at Stalingrad. However, she suffered a huge loss in people and military equipment, and her offensive capabilities were undermined. G. Derr writes: "The troops were exhausted, for a long time they had no rest day or night and no roof over their heads. The losses were great: the 6th Panzer Division, for example, lost 1100 people from December 12 to December 20 "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 97).

Scheibert also writes about the heavy losses of the division: "The number of companies has decreased by about 50% due to the fighting of recent days. There were also losses among the command staff of the companies, which were not replaced. These incomplete data for one division give only some idea of the scale of the actual losses of the enemy. In total, his strike force lost 230 tanks and up to 60% of motorized infantry. At the same time, the enemy still possessed considerable means of struggle. Therefore, on December 23, the Soviet troops received the task of strengthening their positions and continuing the fighting to restore the situation in the Ivanovka, Vasilievka, Kapkinsky sector.

December 23

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

Fierce fighting continued southwest of Stalingrad. The enemy, with the help of submachine gunners and 70 tanks, attacked one settlement, defended by the fighters of the N-th unit. On the outskirts of the settlement, our gunners knocked out and burned 10 German tanks. In another sector, enemy infantry and tanks attacked our positions in the railway area, but were driven back with heavy losses for him.

Evening messages:

Fierce fighting continued southwest of Stalingrad. The Germans continue to bring up and bring into battle new forces of tanks and infantry, but they fail to break the

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resistance of the Soviet fighters. On the contrary, during the day the enemy was driven out of two settlements. Our units continue to destroy the manpower and equipment of the Nazis.

On December 23, fierce battles unfolded on the front of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps for the capture of the settlements of Vasilyevka and Kapkinsky. The 3rd and 49th Guards Rifle Divisions, going on the offensive, broke into these settlements. The enemy tried to return them with counterattacks, but they were all repulsed with heavy losses for the enemy.

The battles for the settlements of Vasilyevka and Kapkinsky continued all night on December 24th. Parts of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps came close to enemy positions at night and bombarded them with grenades. All attempts by the German command of the tank counterattacks to dislodge the Soviet units from the eastern outskirts of Vasilievka were unsuccessful.

In the zone of the 51st Army and the 1st Guards Rifle Corps of the 2nd Guards Army, the enemy did not show any activity that day.

On the afternoon of December 23, in connection with the successful offensive of the troops of the Southwestern Front, the Chief of the General Staff of the German Ground Forces informed the Don Army Group that, in view of the defeat of the German and Italian troops on the Northern Don, all units heading to the front would be transferred Army Group B. Therefore, the 11th Panzer Division, which had advanced to the Kotelnikovskoe direction, was returned to the lower reaches of the Chir River. At the same time, the 6th Panzer Division from the 57th Panzer Corps was ordered to send to this area. In the current situation, the command of Army Group "Don" decided to temporarily go on the defensive in the Kotelnikovsky direction.

In the battles in the area of the river. Myshkov, both sides suffered significant losses. The enemy lost about 4 thousand soldiers and officers, 92 tanks, 29 guns and mortars, and up to 80 aircraft; Soviet troops - 4.3 thousand people,

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12 tanks, 41 guns and a mortar, several dozen aircraft. The concentration of all forces of the 2nd Guards Army on the river. Myshkov ended on December 23. It deployed in a 25-kilometer strip between the farms of Shabalinsky and Kapkinsky and numbered more than 122 thousand people, 2325 guns and mortars, including 50-mm mortars, 84 guards mortars and 469 tanks. As a result, the balance of forces and means on the Kotelnikovsky direction changed in favor of the Soviet troops, which

rye achieved superiority by three to four times. However, in aviation, the advantage remained with the enemy - 1.7: 1.

Thus, as a result of the offensive from December 12 to 23, 1942, the troops of the Goth Army Group advanced 58 kilometers to the northeast, with an average advance rate of up to 5 kilometers per day. By December 23, having used up all his forces, the enemy was forced to abandon the continuation of the offensive. During this time, according to some sources, he lost 8 thousand people killed, 160 tanks, 92 guns and 82 aircraft.

The 2nd Guards Army deployed its main forces at the turn of the Myshkov River and successfully repelled all enemy attacks. On its right flank was the 1st Guards Rifle Corps under the command of Major General I. I. Missan. The 24th Guards Rifle Division of this corps occupied the defense north of Shabalinsky, Chernomorovo, Nizhne-Kumsky and the 98th Rifle Division - the northern outskirts of Nizhne-Kumsky, Gromoslavka, Ivanovka, the 33rd Guards Rifle Division was in reserve, remaining in the second echelon, the 3rd Guards Rifle Division of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps repulsed the attacks of the Nazis from the left flank, in the Vasilyevka-Kapkinsky section. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was concentrated in the rear of this division. Covering the flanks of the main forces of the army on the right (at the line Pchelinsky - Shabalinsky), the 300th rifle division took up defense, on the left (line Birzovaya - Gnolokayskaya) - the 87th rifle division

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division. At the turn of the river Aksai fought units of the 51st Army.

In defensive battles against the non-Fascist troops of Goth, the Soviet troops showed increased combat prowess, steadfastness and great courage. Discussing the reasons for the failures of the 6th Panzer Division in these battles, Scheibert writes: "Our enemy in the Kalmyk steppes cannot be ignored. He fought differently. But in no case can he be denied an offensive impulse, stamina and ruthlessness towards himself. This is what we had to learn from him again and again."

Analyzing the actions of the German troops in the Kotelnikovskaya operation from December 12 to 23, 1942, G. Derr writes in the book "The March on Stalingrad":

"In 10 days, from December 12 to 21, the 57th Panzer Corps, overcoming the resistance of the enemy, many times superior in numbers, the presence of tanks and anti-tank weapons, advanced 80 km.

To accomplish the immediate task - mastering the remote 45 km from the starting positions of the boundary of the river. Aksai, as well as the occupation of bridgeheads in the area of Zalivsky, Shestakov and Kruglyakov - it took the corps three days.

The next roll is neg. Aksai to the river located at a distance of 35 km from it. Myshkov - cost us seven days of heavy fighting and very heavy losses. When the corps on December 23, that is, on the ninth day from the moment the offensive began, was forced to stop it, being on the bridgeheads on the river. Aksai, r. Myshkov has not yet been overcome.

The possibility of the available forces to advance further was negligible. The combat actions of the corps over the past three days have shown that its forces were so expended as a result of battles with the enemy, advancing from the flank and rear and intensifying their attacks, that they were no longer enough to achieve decisive successes. To the same, it was not possible to stretch even more along the positions of the Romanian troops on the flanks

possible.

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The troops were exhausted, for a long time they had no rest, day or night, and no roof over their heads. The losses would have been great: the 6th Panzer Division alone lost 1,100 men from 12 to 20 December.

Despite the fact that the 57th Panzer Corps inflicted a number of sensitive blows on the enemy, who significantly outnumbered him and showed himself well in battles, there were no signs that the enemy's resistance after forcing the river. Myshkova will weaken. With a sober and clear assessment, one could come to the conclusion that if the 57th Panzer Corps remains in the same composition in which it then operated and is not replenished with fresh forces, then with every step beyond the river. Myshkov to the north, the enemy's capabilities to deliver a crushing blow to this corps will improve. This situation could change only if the 6th Army immediately broke through the front of the encirclement with a blow to the south.

Within nine days, the 57th Panzer Corps, after crossing the river. Aksai fought, but the line of the river. Myshkov was not yet in his hands, and the only bridgehead at Vasilyevka would not have been captured by him if on the way from the river. Aksai kr. Myshkov, the 17th Panzer Division was not brought up to him.

The next step was to be the capture of the border of the river located 35 km away. Don Queen. Only to the north of this river was it possible to connect with the troops of the 6th Army, and it was not yet clear whether it would be

order to move towards the 57th Panzer Corps and whether it will receive an order to do so.

The opinion repeatedly expressed that the army group Gota from Vasilyevka could move on without hindrance and reach the location of the 6th Army, or that the 6th Army could break through to the 57th Panzer Corps, is not true and indicates an underestimation of the enemy, which at that moment could no longer be justified.

Another question is whether the 57th Tank Corps, with a different plan of operation, could come closer to the location

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6th army. Since the Gota army group set itself the task of trying to connect with the 6th Army southwest of the Tundutovo station, the question arises why the 57th Panzer Corps, after occupying the bridgehead in the Kruglyakov area, did not strike at the shortest and most favorable direction for tank operations through Abganerovo station to the northeast, and turned to the northwest, where he lost many days, fighting heavy battles in the Verkhne-Kumsky region, and suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment. As a result of the fact that this corps was stuck at the turn of the river. Myshkov, he lost his strike force in battles that did not meet his purpose, for which he did not have the infantry so necessary in such a situation.

One cannot but agree that the 57th Panzer Corps, in the composition in which it operated, and with its small number, could not have had a great chance of success even if it attacked in a straight line, bypassing water barriers. Obviously, during the offensive through the Abganerovo station, if the same forces with which he fought from December 12 to 23 acted against him, he would have been able to advance further than to the river. Myshkov "(G. Derr. Campaign to Stalingrad. - S. 96-97).

Thus, the enemy's attempt to break through the outer front of defense and liberate Paulus' 6th Army encircled near Stalingrad by a blow from outside failed. The main reason for this was the ever-increasing resistance of the Soviet troops due to the constant build-up of forces and means in this direction, as well as the courage and steadfastness of Soviet soldiers and commanders.

In these battles, the enemy strike force lost up to 230 tanks and up to 60 percent of its motorized infantry, essentially losing its offensive capability. At the same time, during the fighting, two new armies were transferred to the threatened sector, including the best equipped 2nd Guards Army, several tank corps, and a number of rifle divisions. As a result of this, in

during the course of a defensive operation, the superiority of forces and

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funds, which at first was in favor of the enemy, not only constantly fell, but from a certain moment began to change in the direction of the superiority of the Soviet troops.

Describing the situation as of the end of December 23, A. M.

Vasilevsky writes: "On December 23, the Manstein group was only 35-40 km from the encircled troops of Paulus. However, she was unable to move forward. The 51st Army, together with the troops of the 2nd Guards Army, with air support from the personally working 8th Air Army, Major General T. T. Khryukin, stopped the enemy. The time needed for the final deployment of the 2nd Guards Army, Lieutenant General R. Ya. Malinovsky, was won. The plan of the Nazi command to liberate Paulus' troops failed. Favorable conditions were created for our troops to go on the offensive here. The main role in the performance of this even more responsible task, which had the goal of the final defeat of the Manstein grouping, was mainly assigned to the same 2nd Guards Army. At the same time, to the left, the 51st Army with the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps and the 13th Tank Corps were preparing for an offensive, and to the right, the 5th Shock Army. Fierce battles with the enemy pressing on the banks of the Myshkovo River forced them to postpone the offensive from 22 to 24 December. The 2nd Guards Army had to be further strengthened by the 6th Mechanized Corps, which had arrived from the Stavka reserve, and the 7th Tank Corps had to be transferred to it from the 5th Shock Army; The 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, which was supposed to be used, was withdrawn on December 22 for urgent resupplying with tanks, after which, in the very first days of the operation, it was transferred to reinforce the 51st Army "(Vasilevsky A.M. The matter of a lifetime. - S. 225).

## SITUATION ON DECEMBER 24

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops repelled the attacks of enemy motorized infantry and tanks. As a result of stubborn fighting, the Nazis were driven out of another settlement. Over 1,000 German soldiers and officers, 15 tanks, 63 vehicles, 12 guns, 18 machine guns and 4 aircraft were destroyed. An artillery battery under the command of senior lieutenant Komarov knocked out 8 Germans

some tanks.

Evening messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought to improve their positions. As a result of the counterattack, our units in the area of the railway route defeated 26 battalions of the Nazis, destroyed 7 tanks and occupied the railway crossing. In another sector, the enemy repeatedly attacked one settlement with a force of up to an infantry battalion and 25 tanks. All German attacks were repulsed with heavy losses for them. The gank of senior lieutenant Sholokhov, senior sergeants Blokhi, Galagaev and foreman Kvashnin was in ambush on one of the heights. At dawn, German tanks appeared. Our tankers opened fire, knocked out 5 enemy tanks and repulsed the attack against the nickname.

On the evening of December 23, Goth received an order to withdraw the 6th Panzer Division from the battle and transfer it to the right bank of the Don to help the 3rd Romanian Army. Having fulfilled this order, he reported to Manstein that without amplification

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with fresh reserves, further advancement is impossible. The command of Army Group "Don" had no choice but to temporarily go on the defensive in the Kotelnikovsky direction, reinforce it with troops transferred from the North Caucasus, and only after that think about resuming the offensive. Paulus, having learned that it was completely drowned, requested permission to break through, but was refused.

Thus, the fighting in the Kotelnikovsky direction from December 12 to 23 did not lead to the defeat of the Soviet troops and the deblockade of the 6th field army. Operation Winter Storm failed. The German command, without having solved its main task, achieved only partial success. The maximum depth of advance of the German troops was 65 km, but at the same time their strike force suffered heavy losses - 230 tanks and up to 60% of motorized infantry. In the snowy expanses between the Volga and the Don, the hopes of the Wehrmacht strategists to unblock their Stalingrad grouping were finally dispelled. The Supreme High Command actually abandoned her to her fate, without any hope of salvation.

"On Christmas Eve," recalls I. Vider, a participant in those events, "all our expectations and hopes collapsed like a house of cards." Surrounded on the banks of the Volga and in the steppes near the Don, the best of the Wehrmacht armies was doomed. The long-awaited catastrophe has become an inevitable reality.

After the failure of the deblockade operation, Hitler persistently convinced his close associates that the encircled troops were fettering large Russian forces that were not

they will now be able to carry out major offensive operations on other sectors of the Eastern Front, and the German army, on the contrary, has been able to create a solid front line. However, the most far-sighted non-German military leaders were well aware that the whole word of the Fuhrer's outpouring was nothing but a bluff. From the very beginning they were convinced that the deblockade operation had no chance of success.

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On the morning of December 24, the enemy, counting on the approach of the promised reserves, intended to resume the offensive. At the same time, it was decided to change the direction of the main attack, break through the Soviet defenses, bypass the 2nd Guards Army from the east and, during the offensive along the railway to Stalingrad, break through to the encircled grouping. However, a sharp deterioration in the situation on the left wing of the Don Army Group forced this plan to be abandoned: the 8th Italian Army by that time had been defeated, and the German-Romanian task force Hollidt was hastily retreating under the blows of the troops of the Southwestern Front. But most importantly, the path to Rostov was open to the Soviet troops. Therefore, the Germans were forced to abandon all the forces at their disposal to repel their offensive on the Middle Don. Now they had to think not about the deblockade of the 6th Army, but about saving the entire Don Army Group, since its northern flank was collapsing.

Describing the position of the German troops on that day, G. Derr wrote in his book "The March on Stalingrad":

"On December 24, the formation of the Gotha army group, which took up defense, looked as follows. The 7th Romanian army corps was in the region of Obilnoye, Kenkrya, Shosheldakin; cavalry corps On the sand - Somin-Ekin, Zhutov 2nd, northern outskirts of Samokhin; 57th Panzer Corps - bridgehead at Kruglyakov, heights north of the river. Aksai, Kondaurov; 6th Romanian Army Corps - Generalovsky (incl.), bridgehead in the Chausovsky area.

The defense had to be maneuverable, because the army group was no longer capable of more "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 107).

To conduct such a defense, the enemy prepared three defensive lines. The first defensive line passed along the line of Verkhne-Kumskaya, Zagotskot, a beam south of the settlement of Ivanovka, then along the southern bank of the Myshkova River to the village of Berezovaya. The second defensive line went along the northern slopes of the ridge

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heights. The third is along the southern bank of the Myshkov River. The enemy planned to use the first two lines for fighting the rear guards and therefore not so much occupied troops as prepared from the point of view of various engineering barriers. The line along the Aksai River was prepared as the final line of withdrawal and was well equipped in the engineering department.

respect.

By the end of December 23, they went on the defensive: units of the 17th Panzer Division - from Verkhne-Kumskaya to the settlement of Ivanovka; 6th Panzer Division - from the collective farm Parizhskaya Kommuna to the village of Berezovaya; 23rd Panzer Division - along the southern bank of the Aksay River to Kovalevka.

According to the archive, these formations had a sufficient number of personnel and weapons.

#### THE NUMBER OF FORCES AND EQUIPMENT IN THE ENEMY FORMATIONS AS OF DECEMBER 23, 1942

The Field  
Personal  
Sy

17th Panzer | Up to 6000 40 47 30 DIVISION

6th Panzer Up to 8000 125 50 DIVISION

23rd Panzer | Up to 4500

V

Compiled on the basis of TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 58, l. 9-10.

However, the successful offensive of the troops of the Southwestern Front and their reaching the Millerovo, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsky line forced the German command to withdraw the 6th Panzer Division from the Kotelnikovsky direction in order to regroup it in the Millerovo area. On the night of December 24, the 6th Panzer Division, leaving in front of the units of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps a strong

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covering as part of a motorized infantry regiment with 40-45 tanks, began to withdraw the main forces across the Aksai River. This was mistakenly regarded by the command of the 2nd Guards



army as a preparation for a new offensive in the direction of Abganerovo station - Tundutovo station (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 58, l. 11).

Thus, the enemy hurriedly went on the defensive, not having strong reserves. His Kotelnikovskiy grouping was greatly weakened in connection with the withdrawal of the 6th Panzer Division from its composition.

The former commander of the Stalingrad Front A.I. Eremenko writes:

"On December 23, the enemy launched two attacks at different times: one on Vasilievka and the other on Birzovaya, and captured these points. We regarded these actions of the enemy as combat reconnaissance aimed at revealing the grouping of our forces, and as a desire to improve the tactical position of our troops before continuing the offensive (after a forced pause due to heavy losses suffered on 6, 17 and 23 and tank divisions of the enemy, as well as other units that took part in the offensive during the period of December 12-24). There were grounds for believing that the enemy was preparing to launch a further offensive no later than December 25-26; By the same time, a counterattack from the encircled enemy troops was also being prepared.

Under these conditions, it was important not to miss the moment for a decisive blow against the enemy's Kotelnikovskaya grouping. And this moment was not missed by the front command.

You can also read about how the groupings of troops were created in the memoirs of A. M. Vasilevsky. In them, in particular, he writes:

"Having returned to Verkhne-Tsaritsynsky, I contacted the commander of the Stalingrad Front, who was in Raigorod; we agreed that he would immediately take care of strengthening the 51st Army and, in addition, you would divide part of the forces for organizing defense along the Myshkovo River. After that, I went to Zavarygin, in order to notify the Stavka, to take more decisive measures against

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Nazis advancing from Kotelnikov. I could not contact the Supreme Commander-in-Chief right away. Then I informed the commander of the Don Front, K.K. Rokossovsky, and the commander of the 2nd Guards Army, R.Ya. 1st Guards Army to immediately send them to the poop from Stalingrad, towards the advancing troops of Manstein. I suggested that Malinovsky immediately start organizing the transfer of ready-made units and formations of his army by a forced march to the Myshko River.

wu, so that, having forestalled the enemy, to give him a decisive rebuff at the Myshkovy line.

As for A. I. Eremenko's correction of A. M. Vasilevsky's plan to defeat the Kotelnikov group, the latter treats this with great sarcasm. He writes: "A. I. Eremenko notes that Vasilevsky 'took the criticism as befits a communist,' refused his erroneous proposal and approved the plan worked out by the front commander. After that, he allegedly invited R. Ya. Malinovsky, corps commanders and other army leaders and set the task in accordance with his decision, appointing the offensive for December 24, contrary to the proposal of the command of the 2nd Guards Army to start it on December 25.

What should be said about all these more than amazing statements? It is difficult for me to imagine what A. I. Eremenko was guided by, attributing to me a certain mythical plan of the operation, opposing him with an equally mythical one of his own. After all, the documents convincingly testify that I did not send any considerations about using the 2nd Guards Army against Manstein's troops, not to mention a plan so incompetent in its content, to the commander of the Stalingrad Front ...

The plan of operation, which I submitted to Headquarters on December 18, and which I adhered to to the end,

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has nothing to do with what is attributed to me in the book "Stalingrad". No other fundamental proposals on this issue came from me, and even without the knowledge of the Headquarters, after the approval of the adopted plan, it could not ...

It is also not clear where A. I. Eremenko could have obtained the "Scheme 20" attached to his book with a picture of the plan attributed to me, referred to as the "Plan of the operation of the 2nd Guards Army to defeat the enemy's Kotelnikov group, proposed by the Chief of the General Staff ". It is not known to me who is its true creator "(Vasilevsky A. M. The matter of all life. - P. 229).

The defeat of the Kotelnikov group

December 24

On the morning of December 24, after a 19-minute artillery fire raid along the front line and the nearest depth of the enemy's defense, the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies moved

went on the offensive. Rifle units of the 1st and 13th Guards Rifle Corps of the 2nd Guards Army, without encountering adequate resistance from the enemy, advanced relatively easily and captured the crossings across the Myshkova River. On them, the forward units of the 7th Tank and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps immediately rushed to the left bank of the river, which, in cooperation with parts of the rifle corps, began to expand the bridgehead. The enemy offered more stubborn resistance in the centers of resistance created in the areas of the settlements of the collective farm named after March 8, Verkhne-Kumsky, Vasilyevka and on the right flank of the 51st Army in the area south of Kapkinsky.

By 12 o'clock the rifle corps advancing in the center of the 2nd Guards Army's belt advanced 4-6 kilometers. By this time, the troops of the right flank of the 51st Army had captured Vasilievka and the Kapkinsky junction. However, on the left flank of this army in the region of the Front Elista, the enemy continued to conduct offensive operations, although with less success than before.

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December 25

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops repelled enemy attacks and part of the forces fought offensive battles. In one area the Germans managed to make some progress at the cost of heavy losses. Regrouping our forces, our units pushed the enemy back with a counterattack and restored the situation.

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops pursued the defeated units of the enemy. In one sector, the fighters of the N-th part, with blows from the flanks, occupied a heavily fortified settlement and destroyed 650 German soldiers and officers. 19 guns, 37 machine guns, 51 machine guns, 45 vehicles, warehouses with food and ammunition were captured.

Evening messages:

"During December 25, our troops in the region of the middle Don continued their offensive and occupied several settlements, including the large settlements of Fesenkovo, Markovka (to the west of Kantemirovka), Bugaevka, Rossokhovaty, Bondarevka, Grekov, Fominka, Kuteinikov, the regional center and the large railway station Malchevskaya.

The other day, our troops southwest of Stalingrad launched a counteroffensive and, having broken the resistance of the enemy, again occupied the settlements of Nizhne-Kumsky,

Vasilievka, Kapkinka, Paris Commune, Birzovoi, Verkhne-Kumsky, Zhutov 2nd, Klykov.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops fought offensive battles. Having overcome the stubborn resistance of the enemy and inflicting heavy damage on him, the Soviet units occupied several settlements. The fighters of the N-th part during the day knocked out and burned 26 enemy tanks and destroyed more than 400 Nazis.

From the dawn of December 25, the main forces of the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies, supported by aircraft of the 8th Air Army, resumed the offensive. But by this time the enemy managed to withdraw his troops from the line of contact and took up defense along the line of heights from the collective farm named after

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March 8th to Verkhne-Kurmoyarsky, where he began to offer stubborn resistance. In an effort to stop the offensive of the Soviet troops, in the second half of the day, enemy aircraft launched massive bombing and assault strikes on the battle formations of the 1st Guards, 7th Tank and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps of the 2nd Guards Army. The fighting became protracted. . In order to develop the offensive, the army commander decided at 2 pm to send the second echelons of the 7th Tank and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps into battle.

December 26

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops developed the offensive and, having broken the resistance of the enemy, moved forward. The N-th Guards unit, having defeated the Nazi barrier with a force of up to an infantry battalion with 10 tanks, occupied one settlement. In another section, our units in battles with the enemy exterminated up to 600 German soldiers and officers, burned and knocked out 30 enemy tanks.

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops continued their successful offensive. The fighters of the N-th unit occupied the village and exterminated up to a battalion of German infantry. In another section, our units went to the rear of the retreating enemy columns and captured 560 enemy soldiers and officers. 14 guns, 35 machine guns and a convoy with various military equipment were captured.

Evening messages:

"During December 26, our troops in the region of the middle Don continued to successfully develop the offensive, occupied

several dozen settlements, including the city and the large railway station Tatsinskaya, the district center and the large railway station Verkhne-Garasovka, the regional centers of Krivorozhnye, Kashara, Efremovo-Stepanovka and the large settlements of Kaskovka, Nikolskaya, Sharpaevka, Ilyinka, Kostino - Fast Ryansky, Georgians.

Our troops southwest of Stalingrad continued

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to push the enemy and occupied the settlements of Novoaksaysky, Generalovsky, Kandaurov, Shestakov, Antonov, Kruglyakov, Romashkin, Chilekov.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops, overcoming enemy resistance, again occupied several settlements. Trying to delay the advance of our units in the area of one settlement, the Nazis threw significant forces of tanks into the counterattack. As a result of a fierce battle, our fighters drove the enemy out of this settlement.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops, pursuing the retreating enemy, smashed his manpower and equipment. Our units in the Tatsinskaya area captured 300 German aircraft at the airfields and, in addition, a train with 50 aircraft was captured at the Tatsinskaya railway station. In the battles for the city and the station, 2,000 enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed.

The offensive of the Soviet troops continued. The 7th Tank Corps of the 2nd Guards Army succeeded in capturing Novoaksayskaya with a flank attack and ensuring that the rest of the formations reached this river in the sector from Novoaksayskaya to Klykovo.

In the afternoon, the German command moved the main forces of the 17th Panzer Division to the Verkhne-Yablochny area. However, she failed to hold back the pressure of the Soviet troops. When approaching Verkhne-Yablochnoye, the German tank division came under attack from Soviet attack aircraft and suffered losses. Then, after a bloody battle, the enemy was forced to leave Verkhne Yablochny.

The 6th Mechanized Corps, operating on the left flank of the 2nd Guards Army, went on the offensive simultaneously with the troops on the right flank of the army. In its first echelon, mechanized brigades operated, the offensive of which at first developed slowly. Then the commander of the corps, Major General of the Tank Forces S. I. Bogdanov, decided to bring into battle two tank regiments of the second echelon. By common efforts, the enemy's defenses were hacked. By the end of the day

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the corps approached and entered the battle for the settlements of Samokhin and Sharnutovsky.

By the end of the day, the rifle formations of the 2nd Guards Army, having crossed Aksai, reached the line of the settlements of Biryukovskiy, Shestakov and Kruglyakov. The troops of the right flank of the 51st Army, using the success of the 6th Mechanized Corps, captured the Ternovy state farm and the village of Samokhin. Its 87th rifle division, together with the 6th mechanized corps, entered the battle for Sharnutovsky.

Under these conditions, the 57th German tank corps, outflanked by mobile formations and constantly being attacked by Soviet troops from the front, late in the evening, under the cover of darkness and the rearguards, began to withdraw to the line Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, Gremyachiy, Verkhne-Salsk, Kotchenery .

27th of December

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

“During the night of December 27, our troops in the region of Stalingrad, on the Central Front and in the region of the middle Don continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops, overcoming enemy resistance, continued to move forward. At one advantageous line, the Germans concentrated up to infantry battalions and several artillery and mortar batteries. With a blow from the flanks, our subunits bypassed the enemy. The encircled enemy battalion was destroyed.

In the area of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops continued to successfully develop the offensive. A detachment of Soviet motorized infantry in a sudden raid occupied a large settlement and captured 19 guns, 52 machine guns, 15 vehicles, an ammunition depot and a depot with communications equipment.

Evening messages:

“During December 27, our troops in the region of the middle Don continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied a number of settlements, including large settlements

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points Golaya, Novo-Spasskaya, Trofimenko, Uryupin, Yasinovka, Solonetsky.

Our troops southwest of Stalingrad moved forward and occupied the settlements of Gorodskoy, Potemkinskaya, Sazonov, Biryukov, Dorofeevsky, Vodyansky, Zalivsky, Verkhne-Yablochny, Nebykov, Samokhin, Sharnutovsky, Pimen-Cherni, Zhutovo and Chilekov railway stations. ... having broken the resistance of the enemy, (they) continued to develop the offensive and occupied several settlements. The enemy suffers huge losses.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops continued their successful offensive. The soldiers under the command of Comrade. Rusiyanov in two days of fighting, over 30 settlements were liberated, up to 3,000 enemy soldiers and officers were exterminated, and 1,700 Nazis were captured. In the battles for one settlement, the crew of the tank of Lieutenant Kritsky distinguished himself. On the approaches to the settlement, the Germans set up many anti-tank guns. Soviet tankers broke into the enemy's location and destroyed more than 100 German soldiers and officers with fire from guns and machine guns."

On the morning of that day, the commander of the 51st Army decided to send a mobile group into battle in order to destroy the remnants of the Romanian troops in the area of settlements of Kanukovo, Obilnoe and Kiselevka. However, in view of the fact that the front commander decided to use the main forces of the 8th Air Army that day on the internal front of the encirclement, only 50 fighters and 60 attack aircraft were allocated to support the actions of the troops on the external front, which was clearly not enough.

Exactly.

With the withdrawal of formations of the 2nd Guards Army to the areas of Verkhne-Yablochny and Sharnutovsky, conditions were created for enveloping the enemy in the area of Kotelnikov. But it was not possible to capture this settlement on the move. Part of the 7th Panzer Corps reached the Verkhne-Yablochny area by the end of the day.

The 51st Army, with the troops of the right flank, in cooperation with the 6th mechanized corps, defeated the opposing enemy and reached the line of the state farm

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"Thorn", Zhutov-2. On the left flank of the army, the 13th Tank Corps and the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps went on the offensive in the direction of Zavetnoe. The corps defeated the remnants of the 1st and 4th infantry and 5th cavalry divisions of the Romanians and by the end of the day reached the approaches to Nikolskaya and Zavetnoye.

The enemy, having strengthened the defense of Kotelnikov, began to move from the depths towards the Soviet troops

torized SS division "Viking".

On the evening of that day, the front commander ordered the forward units of the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies to begin pursuing the enemy by December 28, preventing him from systematically retreating to the Manych River, by the end of that day advanced units to reach the Sal River, and on December 29, with the main forces to start pursue the enemy to the Manych River. In addition, the 2nd Guards Army was ordered to detach a mechanized corps from the second echelon for operations in the Tormosinsky direction (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 455, d. 36, l. 266).

In accordance with the order of the front commander, the commander of the 2nd Guards Army decided on December 28 to capture Kotelnikov. The commander of the 51st Army decided to continue the offensive, capture Novo-Ilov Linsky, Zavetnoye and reach the Sal River.

On December 27, the commander of the Stalingrad Front decides to eliminate the threat of an enemy attack on the flank and rear of the 2nd Guards Army in the Kotelnikov area from Tormosin. He sets the task of destroying the Tormosinsk grouping of formations on the right flank of the 2nd Guards Army in cooperation with the 5th Shock Army of the Southwestern Front. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps with the 33rd Guards and 387th Rifle Divisions were ordered to cross the Don in the Krasnoyarskaya, Verkhne-Kur Moyarskaya, Gormosin sector.

December 28  
From the reports of the  
Sovinformburo Morning messages:

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"During the night of December 26, our troops in the region of Stalingrad, on the Central Front and in the region of the middle Don continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops successfully developed the offensive. Without giving the enemy a break, the Soviet units continued to move forward at night. In one sector the enemy infantry, supported by tanks, launched a counterattack. In a fierce battle, our 60s defeated the enemy, destroyed 600 German soldiers and officers, burned \$ tanks and captured 3 guns, 11 machine guns and 14 vehicles with ammunition. |

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops, overcoming the resistance of the enemy, continued the offensive. The tankers of the N-th part defeated the stronghold of the enemy defense and destroyed 400 German soldiers and officers.



Evening messages:

"During December 28, our troops in the region of the middle Don continued to develop the offensive and occupied a number of settlements, including the city and railway station of Chertkovo, the settlements of Pasyukov, Kalinov, Vysochanov, Rudovo, Prosyanny, Krizskoye, Ternovy.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our troops advanced 20-25 km and occupied a number of settlements, including Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, Nizhne-Yablochny, Mayorsky, Na Golny, Karaichev, Kraynaya Balka, Transverse, Budarka, Krylov, Shebalin, Novo-Ilovinsky, Nikolsky, Kise Levka, Ketchenery, Kichkino and railway stations Nebykovsky, Gremyachaya, Kurmoyarsky. ... our troops continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied a number of settlements. The enemy allocates special detachments to cover his retreating troops. Soviet units impose battles on the Germans and destroy their manpower and equipment.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops continued their offensive and occupied a number of settlements. The Nazis are pulling up forces in order to delay the advance of our troops, but under the blows of the Soviet fighters, the newly arrived German units suffer huge losses.

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From the morning of that day, the armies of the Stalingrad Front began to carry out the previously received tasks, having a limited amount of ammunition and fuel. However, even under these conditions, the offensive developed successfully. The troops of the right flank of the 2nd Guards Army (4th Cavalry Corps and 300th Guards Rifle Division) by the end of the day reached the line of Verkhne-Rubezhny, Romashkinsky, Krasnoyarsky. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps with part of the forces of the 33rd Guards Rifle Division went to the Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya area, and the main forces to the Generalovskaya and Novoaksayskaya area.

On this day, stubborn battles unfolded in the Kotelnikov area. The location of the city was very advantageous for defense. The Aksai Kurmoyarsky River with steep banks covered it from the north. From the heights, the entire surrounding area was clearly visible. The task of taking over the city became more complicated because the 6th mechanized corps, which at that time was fighting in the Karaichevo region, was delayed in reaching Kotelnikov, and the rifle troops lagged far behind the 7th tank corps.

The 7th Panzer Corps began the battle at dawn. Taking advantage of the fact that the enemy had moved forces to the attacked areas, the sappers set up a crossing aside.

across the Aksai Kurmoyarsky river. After that, the 87th tank and 7th motorized rifle brigades forded the river and suddenly broke into the western outskirts of Kotelnikovo. By the morning of December 29, Kotelnikovo was cleared of the enemy. |

However, the fighting in the Kotelnikov area did not end with the complete encirclement and destruction of the enemy. The German command managed in advance to withdraw part of the troops of the 17th and 23rd Panzer Divisions to the Sal River. This was due to the fact that units of the 6th mechanized corps were late in reaching Kotelnikovo from the southeast, and the rifle troops fell behind and could not support the battle of the 7th tank corps. In addition, not

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The weak air support of the TROOPS also had a negative effect.

By the end of December 28, the 6th mechanized corps captured Karaichev.

On the front of the 51st Army, the 13th Tank and 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps quickly broke the enemy resistance in the areas of Kanukovo and Kenkrya and by the end of the day bypassed Verkhne-Salsk and captured the settlements of Kiselevka and Ketchenery, and the forward detachments unleashed battles for Shebalin and Cherished.

December 29th

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"During the night of December 29, our troops in the region of Stalingrad, on the Central Front, in the region of the middle Don, continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

Southwest of Stalingrad, our units fought forward and occupied a number of settlements. According to incomplete data, more than 2000 enemy soldiers and officers, 20 tanks and 40 vehicles were destroyed, 4 enemy aircraft were shot down. Only one of our formations captured 600 enemy soldiers and officers.

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops continued their offensive. The boys of the N-th part, pursuing the retreating enemy, destroyed up to 300 German soldiers and officers, burned 9 tanks and captured 14 guns, 26 machine guns, 18 vehicles and 39 carts with various cargoes. In another sector, the enemy, trying to delay the movement of the Soviet units, left a strong barrier on advantageous lines. Our parts with a swift blow

threw the Nazis. In a fierce battle, 400 German soldiers and officers were destroyed, 260 prisoners, 3 guns, 17 machine guns and 2 ammunition depots were captured.

Evening messages:

"During December 29, our troops south of Stalingrad continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied a number of settlements, including the city and the railway

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station Kotelnikovo, district center Yashkul, large settlement Torgovoe. Large trophies and prisoners were captured in the Kotelnikovo area. ...Fierce fighting broke out on the streets of a large settlement, into which our units broke. The soldiers of the N-th infantry unit, together with the tankers, defeated 2 battalions of non-German infantry.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops continued their offensive. In an effort to stop the advance of the Soviet units, the enemy hastily brings up fresh forces from the deep rear and throws them into counterattacks. In the area of one settlement, the Germans launched three counterattacks one after another. Our units pushed the enemy back, moved forward and occupied this settlement. In another sector, our units dispersed and partly destroyed an enemy infantry regiment.

By the end of the day, the 6th mechanized corps captured Nagolny and reached the southern outskirts of Kotelnikov.

On this day, enemy resistance on the front of the 51st Army dropped sharply. Its disparate units, fleeing defeat, retreated in disorder to the Sal River.

By order of the front commander, on that day, units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps were to capture the Alyoshin, Tgormosin area, acting to meet the 5th shock army of the Western Front, advancing from the Chernyshkovsky, Oblivskaya area. After capturing Tormosin, the corps was to advance forward detachments to Verkhne-Aksenovskiy. The 33rd Guards Rifle Division was assigned the task of seizing a bridgehead on the right bank of the Don and ensuring the crossing of the mechanized corps. The leadership of the troops allocated for the attack on Tormosin was entrusted to the deputy commander of the 2nd Guards Army, Major General Ya. G. Kreizer.

In carrying out this task, these formations began advancing to the lines assigned to them. But its full implementation was associated with crossing the Don in winter conditions in the absence of previously prepared bridge crossings. First attempt to send

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ice tank T-34 ended in failure - the ice could not stand it, and the tank went to the bottom. Therefore, it was decided to leave the T-34 tanks on the left bank of the Don, and only lighter T-70 tanks to be transported to the right bank.

After that, continuing the offensive, by the end of the day, units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps occupied the settlement of Balabanovskiy, capturing large warehouses with clothing items there.

December 30th

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"During the night of December 30, our troops in the region of Stalingrad, on the Central Front, in the region of the middle Don, continued to conduct offensive battles in the same directions.

South of Stalingrad, our units continued their offensive and occupied a number of settlements. In the last battles, the headquarters of two enemy infantry divisions were captured. In one sector, the commander of the enemy battalion came over to our side and voluntarily surrendered. He was asked to return to his unit and bring it in full force. The officer returned to the battalion subordinate to him and brought him into captivity in full force with weapons. In another section, our tank unit surrounded up to two enemy infantry regiments and exterminated 1,500 Nazis. According to incomplete data, 52 vehicles, 15 guns, 45 mortars and 4 ammunition depots were destroyed.

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops continued their offensive and in a number of sectors beat off enemy counterattacks. Significant forces of the German infantry in one area managed to push the subdivision of the H-th part. The Soviet fighters pushed the enemy back with a counterattack and restored the situation. 400 enemy corpses and 6 wrecked tanks remained on the battlefield. In another section, the N-th part, having broken the resistance of the enemy, moved forward and is fighting on the outskirts of a large settlement.

Evening messages:

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"During December 30, our troops south of Stalingrad continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied the district

ion centers Remontnoye and Troitskoye, the settlements of Pogozhka, Ternovka, Ivanovka, Sirotsky, Trudnikov, Fomin, Chernyshev, Valuevka, Ulan-Erege, Leninsky, and Semiinaya station. ... During the capture of Kotelnikov, two regiments of German infantry were defeated. In the Yashkul area, units of an enemy motorized division were hit. Continuing to move forward, the Soviet troops destroyed 1500 enemy soldiers and officers, 15 tanks, 20 guns, 12 mortars, 50 vehicles. In air battles and anti-aircraft artillery fire, 28 German aircraft were shot down.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops fought offensive battles and in a number of sectors beat off counterattacks of enemy reserves that had come to the rescue. In another section, our units, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, moved forward.

On this day, formations of the 51st Army, pursuing the enemy, captured the Remontnaya station, the settlement of Ilyichev-Ternovsky.

31th of December

From the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau

Morning messages:

"During the night of December 31, our troops south of Stalingrad, in the region of the middle Don and on the Central Front, continued to conduct offensive battles on their former directions.

South of Stalingrad, our troops continued to pursue the retreating enemy. The attempts of individual detachments of the Nazis to resist were broken by the blows of the advancing Soviet units. In Kotelnikovo, in addition to the trophies, which were already reported earlier, 40 anti-tank guns, a large warehouse of air bombs, 5 various aircraft, 4 heavy tanks were captured.

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops were engaged in offensive battles and in a number of sectors they strengthened their positions. The fighters of the N-th part knocked out the Germans from a heavily fortified defense center and exterminated 260 Nazis. On

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In another sector, enemy infantry and tanks launched several fierce counterattacks. Initially, they managed to push our units. Then the Soviet fighters delivered a blow to the enemy's flank and forced him to retreat in disarray.

Evening messages:

"South of Stalingrad, our troops, breaking the resistance of the enemy, continued to successfully move forward and occupied a number of settlements. In the areas of Sirotsky and Ivanovka, Soviet soldiers captured over 700 enemy soldiers and officers. 18 field and 16 anti-aircraft guns, 20 vehicles, 1240 rifles, a lot of ammunition and trophies were captured.

In the region of the middle Don, our troops fought offensive battles and in a number of sectors they secured the previously occupied lines. In the battles for one stronghold of the enemy, our units were exterminated up to an infantry battalion and captured 120 Nazis. Our troops in the area of the lower Don occupied the city and the Oblivskaya railway station, captured large trophies, including an echelon with aircraft.

On this day, the troops of the 51st Army began fighting for the Zimovniki station. By that time, rifle troops had reached the Sal River at the Andreevskaya, Sirotsky, Nikolskaya, Torgovoe, Ketchenery fronts.

On December 31, the formations of the group of Major General Kreyzer at 16 o'clock left from three sides to Tormosin. The first group, together with units of the 387th Infantry Division, turned towards Tormosin from the west. The second group, advancing from the direction of the village of Morskaya, captured Lesopitnik, creating a threat of bypassing Tormosin from the west. Despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, by 19:00 the 15th Guards Mechanized Brigade itself captured Tormosin. By this time, the 6th Guards Mechanized Brigade had captured Zakharovo.

In stubborn battles in the Tormosin area, Soviet soldiers destroyed over 300 enemy soldiers and officers. Large trophies were captured, including the food bases of the Don Army Group, warehouses with ammunition and military equipment.

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With the capture of Tormosin, the troops of the right flank of the 2nd Guards Army completed their tasks. Therefore, it was decided at the end of the day by the troops of this and the 51st armies to gain a foothold along the line of Ilmen-Chirskaya, Verkhne-Rubezhnaya, Tormosin, Krivskaya, Komissarovskaya, Ilichev-Ternovskaya, Glubokaya.

Thus, as a result of the successful completion of offensive actions in the Kotelnikovsky direction, the Romanian 4th Army was finally defeated, and the German 4th Panzer Army retreated to the Sal River with heavy losses. Under the blows of the troops of the Stalingrad and the left wing of the Southwestern Fronts, the remnants of the formations of the Don Army Group retreated in a southerly direction, across the Manyh River. The operation of the German command

The action to deblockade the 6th Army, surrounded between the Volga and the Don, ended in another brutal defeat.

With regard to enemy losses and trophies during the offensive of the troops of the 2nd Guards and 51st armies of the Stalingrad Front, there are such data: 16 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were killed and captured, 70 tanks, 347 guns and mortars, 20 aircraft were captured Comrade, 282 machine guns and 20 various warehouses, in which there were up to one million shells (TsAMO. F. 303, inv. 4005, d. 60, l. 25-27; f. 407, inv. 9837, d. 188, l. 92).

#### OPERATION OF THE 2nd GUARDS ARMY (24-31 DECEMBER)

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command initially planned to use the 2nd Guards Army (commanded by Lieutenant General R. Ya. Malinovsky, Chief of Staff Major General S. S. Biryuzov) as part of the troops of the Southwestern Front to develop the offensive (according to the plan of operation "Saturn") from the Kalach region in the direction of Rostov-Taganrog. However, the delay in the liquidation of the encircled Paulus grouping and the threat of attempts to unblock it in connection with the creation of Army Group Don in the southeastern sector of the front forced us to reconsider our initial intentions. In the current situation, the Headquarters sent the 2nd Guards Army to the command of the Don Front.

The loading of army units into echelons to go to the front began in early December. 18 and more echelons were loaded per day, and in total 165 trains were used for transportation. Unloading was carried out northwest of Stalingrad, at the stations of Ilovlya, Archeda, Kalinin, Lipki, Kachalino, Tishkin junction, 536th km. The first echelons began to arrive at the places of unloading on December 10 and immediately went to the area of concentration - Vertyachiy, Peskovatka, 85 kilometers northwest of Stalingrad. On December 13, on the eve of receiving a combat mission, the army was transferred to the Averinsky, Kuzinovka, Sredne-Tsartsynsky, Kolpakchi regions (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4055, d. 58, l. 15).

The 2nd Guards Army included the 1st, 13th Guards Rifle and 2nd Guards Mechanized

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bathroom enclosure. It outnumbered the opposing enemy by 3.3 times in rifle battalions, 2.9 times in wartilleries, and 1.7 times in tanks.

On December 16, the commander of the Stalingrad Front set the task of the army by the morning of the next day to move

move to a new starting area in readiness on the morning of December 18 to strike at the enemy from the Kovalevsky, Gromoslavka line in the general direction of Kotel NIKOVO.

The advance of the army troops took place in difficult conditions. Its connections had to cover a distance of 170-200 kilometers in a snowy and frosty winter. The march took place only at night. For each night, the troops marched 40-50 kilometers. All settlements on the way of movement were occupied by hospitals and rear institutions of the Don Front, so there was no hope for rest and heating of the personnel. From the very first days there were great difficulties with the delivery of fuel. A thaw set in during the day: off-road traffic was very difficult. This especially affected the pace of advancement of tank, mechanized units and artillery. Despite this, formations of the 2nd Guards Army reached the areas assigned to them in a timely manner.

At this time, the enemy continued his offensive against the troops of the 51st Army, who gradually rolled back in a northeasterly direction. Therefore, in order to cover the advance of the troops of the 2nd Guards Army, the commander decided first to advance to the line of the Myshkov River one rifle division from each of the two rifle corps, as well as formations of the 2nd mechanized corps. These formations were supposed to occupy a defensive line prepared in advance for them along the northern bank of the Myshkov River and stop the enemy on it.

On December 17, the 4th mechanized and 4th cavalry corps, as well as the 300th and 87th rifle divisions, were transferred to cover the advance and deployment of the army. At the same time, the 87th Infantry Division

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was supposed to conduct defense in the zone of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, and the 4th Cavalry Corps was supposed to cover the left flank of the army with mobile defense.

On the morning of December 19, the enemy, after strong artillery and aviation preparation, with the introduction of the 17th Panzer Division (6 thousand personnel, 70 tanks, up to 100 guns and mortars), went on the offensive in the Novoaksaysky, Antonov sector (TsA MO F. 303, inventory 4007, file 11, sheet 41). Having created a significant superiority in forces and means, the enemy was able to press the Soviet units in the first half of the day and reach the Myshkova River in the Chernomorov-Vasilievka sector. The 4th Cavalry Corps withdrew to the Podstepinsky, Verkhne-Rubezhny line, and the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps (until December 18 - the 4th Mechanized) was withdrawn



den in the area of the Tunginsky forestry.

Thus, in the area from Gromoslavka to Vasilyevka, there was a real threat of an enemy breakthrough in the northeast direction, and the army commander decides to move the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps to the threatened direction. He receives the task - on the night of December 20, to make a march and by 5 o'clock the next day concentrate in the Veshka area in readiness to launch a counterattack in one of three directions - on Shabalinsky, on Nizhne-Kumsky or on Gromoslavka (TsAMO. F. 603 , inventory 23114, file 1 sheet 61).

By that time, formations of the 1st Guards Corps were concentrated in the indicated area by the morning of December 20. At the same time, by the same time, the 7th Tank Corps of the 2nd Guards Army arrived in the Shabalinskaya area, which was supposed to support a counterattack in the direction of Nizhne-Kumsky. At that time, the defending units of the 98th Infantry Division were engaged in fierce battles with the advancing enemy units in the Gromoslavka area.

On December 21, the enemy shifts his efforts to the Vasilievka, Kapkinsky sector, where he concentrates up to 80 tanks with motorized infantry. The commander decides to send that

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Yes, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps is ready to conduct a counterattack in the direction of Vasilyevka to a depth of 10 kilometers.

The corps commander, having received this task, decides to launch a counterattack, having in the first echelon two mechanized brigades and one tank regiment, reinforced by artillery. The second tank regiment was left in the reserve of the corps to perform tasks that suddenly arose. A counterattack of such force was supposed to overturn the advancing enemy units and restore the destroyed defenses in the sector of the 3rd Guards Rifles of the KOV DIVISION.

To reinforce the 49th Guards Rifle Division, which was supposed to launch a counterattack on the night of December 23 and restore the situation along the northern bank of the Myshkova River, a tank regiment and two anti-tank destroyer batteries were detached from the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps. The combat group created on this base and reinforced by two rifle companies, together with units of the 3rd Guards Rifle Division, defeated the enemy in the Vasilievka area by night attack and reached the northern bank of the Myshkova River (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 296261, d. 13 , sheet 16).

At the end of December 23, the 2nd Guards Army

the 6th mechanized corps was also introduced.

Thus, the plans of the German command to break through to the encircled grouping failed. From the first days of the offensive, Soviet troops began to actively resist the enemy and inflict irreparable losses. The retreating troops of the 51st Army tightly fettered the enemy's flanks, as a result of which the width of the sector of his breakthrough was constantly narrowing. The coordinated actions of the 2nd Guards Mechanized and 13th Guards Rifle Corps defeated the enemy, and all his attempts to seize a bridgehead on the northern bank of the Myshkov River failed. Having suffered heavy losses, by the end of December 23, the enemy stopped the offensive. His powers were

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thin: in the tank divisions there were 40-70 tanks left, which was less than half of what he started the offensive with (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 58, l. 49).

On December 23, 1942, the chief of staff of the 2nd Guards Army, S.S. Biryuzov, compiled a table of the balance of forces and means in the zone of his army. According to him, against 18 infantry battalions, 3 tank regiments, 15 enemy artillery battalions (235 tanks and 270 guns and mortars), the army troops had 60 rifle battalions, 3 tank brigades, 11 tank battalions and 43 artillery battalions (419 tanks). and 766 guns and mortars). Thus, the troops of the 2nd Guards Army outnumbered the enemy operating in their zone: in infantry battalions - 3.3 times, in tanks - almost 2 times, in artillery - 2.8 times.

To defeat the enemy's Kotelnikovsky grouping, the commander of the 2nd Guards Army on December 22 decided, starting an offensive at dawn on December 25, to deliver two blows in the general direction of Kotelnikovo. The troops of the 2nd Guards Army, together with the troops of the 51st Army, were to defeat the main enemy forces between the Myshkova and Aksai rivers, and reach the line of the latter by the end of the first day of the offensive. In the future, after the 6th mechanized corps was brought into battle from the line of the Aksai River, it was planned to complete the defeat of the enemy grouping and, by the end of the fourth day of the operation, reach the line of the settlements of Mayorsky, Kotelnikovo, Poperechny. The width of the army's offensive zone was 40 kilometers, the depth of the operation was 96 kilometers, and the average advance rate was up to 24 kilometers per day.

To deliver a strong initial blow, it was decided to concentrate the 1st, 13th rifle, 7th tank and 2nd mechanized corps in the first echelon of the army. In the second echelon, the 6th mechanized

ny corps, and in the combined arms reserve - one 387th rifle division.  
The start of the offensive was planned

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at 8 am on December 24, 1942 (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, file 72, sheet 12).

The offensive operation was planned in a strip of 40 kilometers to a total depth of 96 kilometers with a total duration of four days. Therefore, the average rate of advance was determined at 24 kilometers per day. The main efforts were planned to be concentrated on a section of 18 kilometers, which was less than half the width of the total offensive zone.

Making a decision, the army commander massed forces in the direction of the main attack, for which purpose the 7th Tank and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps were sent to the zone of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps. However, due to the lack of time, the army commander could not regroup most of the artillery in the direction of the main attack. In addition, erroneous conclusions from the assessment of the situation about the possible transition of the enemy to the offensive on Abganerovo forced the commander to concentrate significant forces (6th mechanized corps and 387th rifle division) at the junction with the 51st army.

A feature of the decision of the army commander was also the non-simultaneous transition of army formations to the offensive. This was explained by the fact that the 17th Guards Rifle Corps, in connection with the withdrawal of the 17th Panzer Division to Verkhne-Kumsky, did not have direct contact with the enemy, and to establish it was forced to overcome a space of 10-12 kilometers.

December 24

From the dawn of December 24, after a 10-minute artillery fire raid along the front line and the nearest depth of the enemy defenses, the 2nd Guards and 51st armies went on the offensive.

The troops of the 2nd Guards Army relatively quickly broke the enemy's resistance and captured the crossings across the Myshkova River. They immediately rushed to the left bank of the river forward units of the 7th tank and

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2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, which, in cooperation with the 12th and 13th Guards Rifles

corps, with the support of artillery and attack aircraft, began to expand the bridgehead. By 12 o'clock the rifle corps advancing in the center of the operational formation of the 2nd Guards Army had advanced 4-6 kilometers. Favorable conditions were created for a strike on the flank of the enemy.

About the fighting in the offensive zone of the 2nd Guards Army on December 24, G. Derr wrote: "On the night of December 24-25, the enemy launched attacks on the front of the 57th Tank Corps, broke through the guard line of the 23rd Tank Division north of the river. Aksai, passed through the battle formations of the infantry and penetrated with tanks to the bridge in the Shestakov area, from where he was thrown back. The 17th Panzer Division also fought heavy defensive battles, but the corps resisted "(G. Derr. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 107).

December 25

In order to develop the offensive, the army commander decided at 2 pm to send the second echelons of the 7th Tank and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps into battle. Entering the battle was provided by artillery fire and air strikes.

In this battle, units of the 7th Panzer Corps (commander Major General of the Panzer Troops P. A. Rotmistrov) acted especially skillfully. They, widely using maneuver, were able to reach the flank of the enemy and, despite the presence of minefields, from there attacked the village of Novoaksayskaya and captured it. In this settlement, up to a thousand prisoners were captured, a lot of military equipment and ammunition. By its actions, the corps ensured the successful advancement of rifle formations from the front, which were able to reach the Aksai River at the turn from Novoaksaiskaya to Klykovo.

The next day it was decided to continue the offensive in the general direction of Kotelnikovo. To ensure the offensive, the 7th Panzer Corps on the night of December 26 had to capture the forward detachments

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Generalovsky and ensure the crossing of troops across the Aksai River in the area of this settlement. At the same time, it was decided to pull the 6th mechanized corps forward to attack Kotelnikovo from the left flank.

When it became clear on December 25 that the enemy was preparing an attack on the flanks of the Romanian troops near Samokhin in the east and Generalovskoye in the west, the commander of the 57th Panzer Corps ordered the 17th Panzer Division on the night of December 26 to withdraw beyond the river. Aksai and concentrate at Chilekovo and Nebykovo. On the river Aksai was left alone 23rd

tank division "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - S. 107).

December 26

A. I. Eremenko writes: "On December 26, our troops broke through the enemy defenses at the turn of the Aksai River. For three days of intense fighting, the armies advanced up to 30 kilometers. The German and Romanian troops operating on the borders of the Myshkova and Aksai rivers were defeated and began to roll back to the south. The troops of the Stalingrad front went over to their relentless pursuit. On December 26, the 7th tank corps of Major General P.A. Mistrov occupied Verkhne-Yablochny.

G. Derr: "On December 26, at dawn, the Russians broke through at Generalovsky and within a few hours defeated the 6th Romanian Army Corps, which fled in a panic, partly to the south, and partly through the frozen Don to the west. Later it was possible to stop the remnants of this corps at Kudinov.

Arriving at dawn after heavy night fighting in the Chilekovo area, the 17th Panzer Division, due to overwork of its personnel, was unable to counterattack quickly enough to restore the situation. With the exception of a small group of Bischof (one reinforced motorized company with two self-propelled guns), which had taken up positions in Verkhne- and Nizhne-Yablochnoye, transferred here in a short time, at that moment no

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there were no forces that could block the Russian way to Kotelnikovo.

After the defeat of the western flank of the Romanian army, a critical situation arose on the eastern flank; the enemy attacked the cavalry corps, and Sharnutovsky and Samokhin were abandoned.

The 23rd Panzer Division still held the settlements in the valley of the river. Aksai, however, the army group was forced to make a decision to withdraw on the night of December 27 to the line of Ketchenery, Verkhne-Salsk, Extreme Balka, Gremyachaya, Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya.

The retreat of the 57th Panzer Corps was carried out, despite the ice, as well as enemy attempts to outflank the corps.

However, the 4th Romanian army suffered a final defeat. Already at night, she moved further than she was ordered, and without a fight she gave the Ketcheners to the enemy.

27th of December

With the withdrawal of formations of the 2nd Guards Army to the Verkhne-Yablochny and Sharnutovsky regions, conditions were created for enveloping the enemy in the Kotelnikov region from the north and south. In order to eliminate this threat and tear off their main forces from the Soviet troops, the German command ordered, on the morning of December 27, to launch a series of counterattacks by units of the 17th and 23rd Panzer Divisions. At the same time, he stepped up air raids on the combat formations of the 7th Panzer and 6th Mechanized Corps, trying to stop their advance. However, by noon, all counterattacks of the enemy tanks were repelled and the Soviet troops began to pursue. However, it was not possible to take Kotelnikovo on the move. The 7th Panzer Corps, experiencing a shortage of ammunition and fuel, was forced to stop the offensive.

G. Derr: "On the morning of December 27, she (the 4th Romanian army) was located at the turn: the area northeast of Kise Levka, Iki-Zorgakin, Verkhne-Salsk.

In front of the 57th Panzer Corps, the enemy advanced to an area 8 km north of Kotelnikovo and was going (he had already made similar attempts twice) to seize

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to make the city by covering it from the east. He struck to the southwest, unexpectedly quickly taking possession of Vypasnaya (Popescu's cavalry corps) and Pimen-Cherni (23rd Panzer Division).

In view of this, a threat was created to the left flank of the 7th Romanian cavalry corps in the Upper region. Salsk. It was to be expected that at the slightest blow he would begin to retreat. When about 11 o'clock 10 enemy tanks appeared in Kadzhenkin, the 1st Rumanian division began to retreat in a panic through Shebalin; the reserve of the army group stationed there (the 156th motorized regiment) failed to hold it either.

The consequence of this was a retreat in the remaining sectors of the front occupied by the corps; he went to the border of the river. Akshibay. When the enemy with tanks then launched strong attacks and defeated the bravely fighting 4th Romanian infantry division south of Kiselevka, the 7th Romanian corps retreated even further to the river. Sal on both sides of the Treasured. In the evening, he was again attacked by enemy tanks, the troops lost control and were dispersed.

The struggle of the 4th Romanian army was over. Hoth's "Army Group" no longer existed; The 4th Panzer Army consisted of only two bloodless divisions, the 16th Motorized Division isolated in the Stepnaya area and the remnants of the fled 4th Romanian Army.

When, on the afternoon of December 27, the enemy took Pokhlebin and simultaneously advanced from the east across the railway south of Kotelnikov to the west, the position of the 57th Panzer Corps seemed hopeless "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 107-108).

December 28th

By the end of the day, army troops captured Kotelnikov. In the battles for this city, the enemy lost up to 3 thousand people killed and captured and was forced to abandon 65 guns and mortars, 280 boxes of shells and mines, 600 boxes of ammunition, several vehicles with food in good condition (TsAMO. FYu. 303, inventory 4005, file 1, sheet 39).

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G. Derr: "Despite this, the corps still held Kotelnikovo on December 28, because the supreme commander-in-chief forbade the withdrawal even in this situation. The Russians did not use this "measure" of the German command, which was so favorable for THEM (we will dwell on this later).

In a report from the commander of the 4th Panzer Army, received on December 28 in the evening, to the commander of the Don Army Group, it was said: "Today, for the seventeenth day, the 57th Panzer Corps has been continuously fighting against the constantly strengthening enemy, without having a single night of rest. Despite this, until today, he has managed to survive. However, one cannot ignore the fact that incredible stress caused severe overwork "(Derr G. Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 109).

December 29th

Eremenko: "The shock units of the tank corps, breaking into Kotelnikovo from the west, defeated the enemy troops defending the city. On the night of December 29, small enemy groups of machine gunners still held individual houses, but by dawn the city was completely cleared of the enemy. The remnants of the enemy troops fled south in a panic. A mass of broken enemy equipment remained on the streets of the city: burned tanks, overturned vehicles, wrecked guns.

In the street fighting in Kotelnikovo, the decisive role was played by the actions of small groups. Warriors of the divisions of Minin, Kochedykov, Surkov distinguished themselves here.

Tankers operated in difficult conditions. The crews of Comrade Bondarenko, with exceptional skill and courage, took advantage of the slightest opportunity to

move forward. Supporting their infantry under fierce fire, the tankers delivered the infantry landing to the city. The well-coordinated interaction of tanks with infantry ensured a decisive success.

Our troops in the city captured large trophies: 15 aircraft, 40 guns, 40 tanks, large warehouses with

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food, ammunition and fuel" (Eremenko. - P. 421).

On this day, G. Derr in his book "The Campaign to Stalingrad" succinctly notes: "On December 29, Kotelnikova was abandoned" (G. Derr, Campaign to Stalingrad. - P. 109). |

Thus, the 2nd Guards Army played a special role in liquidating the attempts of the fascist German troops to link up from outside with the grouping under the command of Paulus surrounded by Stalingrad. The entry of its troops to the line of the Myshkova River, and then a decisive blow against the enemy in a southerly direction, radically changed the situation on the outer front of the encirclement. The enemy advancing there was not only stopped, but also driven back 100-150 km south of the Myshkov River, and in the area of Tormosin, his second strike group was defeated in cooperation with the troops of the Southwestern Front. This significantly moved the outer front of the encirclement from Stalingrad by 100-120 kilometers and created favorable conditions for the complete defeat of his encircled grouping in Stalingrad.

#### 1st Guards Rifle Corps

As part of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps (commander Major General I. I. Missan, chief of staff Colonel Sokolovsky), by the end of December 16, find the FOX:

the 98th Rifle Division (commander Colonel I.F. Seregin, 10,277 men), which, after the march, concentrated at the villages of Verbovskaya, Grachi, and Nizhne-Tsaritsynskaya;

the 24th Guards Rifle Division (commander Major General P. K. Koshevoy, 13 thousand people), which was on the march with the head of the column in the Kolpachki area;

The 33rd Guards Rifle Division (commander Major General A. I. Utvenko, 12.6 thousand people), which also made a march and reached the village of Pukhovskiy with the head of the column.



The corps headquarters was located on the northern outskirts of the village of Grachi. Most of the rear divisions of the divisions of the corps, as well as the 4th auto-drawn battalion of the corps with ammunition, were left in the unloading area due to lack of fuel at a distance of up to 150 kilometers. Parts of the corps had with them food for two days and no more than half of the ammunition load (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 5410, d. 3, l. 449).

At that time, the corps had about 7.2 thousand personnel, 450 guns and mortars (caliber 76 mm and above), 126 45-mm anti-tank guns (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 27292, d. 1, l. 93).

Of the entire personnel of the corps, about 30% had combat experience, the remaining 70% were newly

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mobilized persons and sailors who were under Stalingrad from ships and coastal units of the Pacific Fleet.

Thus, the rather powerful 1st Guards Rifle Corps, after unloading, turned out to be very stretched along the routes and poorly provided financially due to the lack of fuel. The heads of the marching columns of two of his three divisions were at a distance of up to 45 kilometers from the Myshkova River. He was faced with the task of organizing defense along the northern bank of this river.

At the same time, it must be understood that the corps had to take up defensive positions in the absence of direct contact with the enemy under the cover of units of the 51st Army, which at that time were engaged in heavy defensive battles with the enemy 15-20 kilometers south of Myshkovo. The divisions were to occupy the lines, which were 15-20 per cent prepared for defense in terms of engineering. True, before equipping positions in winter conditions in the absence of mechanization equipment was also not an easy task and required a lot of time.

Under these conditions, the corps commander decided, having taken up defensive positions along the edge of the Myshkov River at a front of up to 24 kilometers, to turn the settlements of Nizhne-Kumsky, Gromoslavka, Petropavlovka and Ivanovka into strongholds. For this, the main forces of the corps had to be concentrated in the first echelon. One 70th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 24th Guards Rifle Division was left in reserve, reinforced by the 26th Guards Antitank Fighter Battalion. Rifle divisions were given the task of organizing defense on a front of 15 to 18 kilometers, having a combat formation of two echelons, but at the same time, the bulk of the fire

weapons, especially anti-tank ones, should have been located near the front edge. Thanks to this, the average tactical density of anti-tank weapons in the corps' defense zone reached 6 guns and 15 anti-tank rifles per kilometer of the defense front.

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us. In the case of their massing in the tank-hazardous directions, these densities increased by one and a half to two times. For more detailed reconnaissance of the situation, horse patrols were sent from each division of the first echelon to the southern bank of the Myshkova River to a depth of up to 5 kilometers.

Thus, the defense of the corps was aimed at inflicting the main defeat on the enemy on the approaches to its forward edge and was built primarily as an anti-tank one. It took more than a day to equip it, the commander of each division knew his combat mission well and prepared the troops for its implementation. But it was at this time that the plans were violated by the will of the senior commander.

On December 18, the 87th Rifle Division was withdrawn from the 1st Guards Rifle Corps and received the task of taking up defenses on the Aksai River at night. In connection with her departure, the front of defense of the 98th Rifle Division increased to 24 kilometers, as a result of which the tactical density of forces and assets dropped sharply.

On the morning of December 19, after heavy artillery and air preparation, the enemy attacked units of the 51st Army. He managed to break through their defenses in the area of Verkh Ne-Kumskaya ik at 15:00 on December 19, the forward units of the 17th Panzer Division reached the front line of defense of the 300th Rifle Division and the 98th Rifle Division of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps in the Chernomorov sector, Nizhne-Kumskaya. Under these conditions, the 300th Rifle Division was reassigned to the commander of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps and included in its defense system.

In the area of the enemy breakthrough from Chernomorovo to Nizhne-Kumskaya, units of the 1053rd Infantry Regiment of the 300th Infantry Division and one battalion of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 98th Infantry Division and one battalion (24 tanks) of the 55th Tank Regiment of the 85th th tank brigade. In addition, anti-tank guns were sent there from other defense sectors. Thanks to this, the first attacks of enemy tanks on December 19 were repelled, but then the enemy, pulling up

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he reserves, by the end of the day managed to capture the southern

part of the villages of Chernomorovskaya and Nizhne-Kumskaya. However, all enemy attempts to force the Myshkova River were thwarted.

On December 20, the enemy repeatedly repeated attacks in this direction with the support of artillery fire and air strikes. However, having lost up to 20 tanks, 8 armored vehicles and several hundred soldiers and officers killed and wounded, by the end of the day the enemy was forced to stop the attacks (TsAMO. F. 1006, op. 26053, d. 3, l. 5).

However, the situation continued to be tense. Therefore, in order to increase the depth of anti-tank defense in the direction of Gromoslavka, Fifth Tauride, by decision of the army commander on December 20, an anti-tank area was created at the expense of the 54th anti-tank battalion of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps. In addition, by his own decision, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps and the 7th Tank Corps transferred to the army were concentrated in the threatened direction in readiness for counterattacks by the morning of December 21. To reinforce the units of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps that day, the army commander sent the 648th RGK cannon artillery regiment (18 152-mm howitzers cannons), the 48th Guards mortar regiment (17 M-13 installations), which occupied firing positions north of Gromoslavka. In addition, the 55th tank regiment of the 85th tank brigade (23 tanks) and the 234th tank regiment of the 235th tank brigade (21 tanks) were transferred to the operational subordination of the corps commander (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 50681, d. 18, l. 529, 606).

As a result of the arrival of new forces, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, which defended itself in a zone of up to 36 kilometers, by the morning of December 21 was able to create a density of forces and assets up to one rifle battalion, 14 guns and mortars, 22 anti-tank rifles and 8 tanks per kilometer front. At the same time, the corps commander, focusing his main efforts on the most threatened student

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a line 15 kilometers wide, was able to increase the density of forces and means by 2-2.5 times.

On December 21, the enemy continued the offensive in the Gromoslavka area, concentrating up to an infantry regiment and 100 tanks in this direction. Units of the 98th Rifle Division repelled three enemy attacks by 1 pm. The infantry, which broke through to the southern outskirts of the settlement, was driven back by a counterattack of the divisional reserve. According to Soviet information, during this day the enemy lost about 20 tanks and up to 500 soldiers and officers. The losses of the 98th and 24th Guards Rifle Divisions amounted to 135 killed and 466 wounded (TsAMO. F. 429, op. 5663, file 3, sheet 355).

On December 22, the enemy, convinced of the futility of the attacks, began to withdraw his main forces to the south, leaving part of the forces of tanks and infantry at the Gromoslavka-Ivanovka line. The corps commander, having learned about this, ordered part of the forces to continue to hold the occupied line, and part - to conduct reconnaissance in force in the direction of the village of Verkhne-Kumskaya with the task of capturing this settlement (TsAMO. F. 429, op. 5563, d. 2, l. 208).

To solve this problem, a grouping was created as part of the 72nd Guards Rifle Regiment of the 24th Guards Rifle Division, reinforced with tanks of the 55th Tank Regiment, one artillery battalion of the 50th Artillery Regiment and one battery of the anti-tank battalion. This grouping, leaving the Chernomorskaya at 04:30, approached the northern outskirts of Verkhne-Kumskaya by 10:00 and attacked the enemy on the move. However, the enemy turned out to be ready and repulsed this, and then several subsequent attacks by the Soviet troops. An attempt to capture Verkhne-Kumsky on the move on December 23 ended in failure.

All this time, the rest of the formations of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, despite the absence of attacks from the enemy and the determination of the beginning of his withdrawal in a southerly direction, continued to remain on their lines, taking only minor actions to improve their position.

Requirement

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regulations on the immediate transition to the pursuit of the enemy were not fulfilled, as a result of which the enemy was able to begin a systematic withdrawal of his forces and means to the rear lines.

On the evening of December 23, the commander of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps received the task from the morning of December 24 to launch an offensive together with units of the 7th Tank Corps in the general direction of Kotelnikovo, acting in the direction of the main attack of the army. The total width of the offensive zone of the corps reached 24 kilometers. The immediate task was determined to a depth of 4 kilometers. By the end of the first day, the forward units of the corps, having advanced to a depth of 15-16 kilometers, were supposed to reach the line of the Aksai River in the Verkhne-Rubezhny, Podstepinsky section. Thus, the total depth of advance of the corps formations on the first day of the offensive was to be 25-30 kilometers, of which up to 15 kilometers had to be fought.

Taking into account the need to solve offensive tasks, by the morning of December 24, the corps was reinforced at the expense of the reserves of the army commander. Thanks to this, the average density of forces and means was brought up to 1.4 battalions of

hot, 25 guns and mortars and 9 tanks for every kilometer of the offensive front. Superiority over the enemy was created: in manpower - 5 times, in artillery and mortars - 3 times, but in tanks the enemy still outnumbered the Soviet troops.

The corps commander decided to make the most of his advantage in manpower and artillery, ordering the main forces to be concentrated in the first echelon, leaving only a small reserve at his disposal. True, all divisions were advancing, having a battle formation in two echelons. Artillery (590 guns and mortars) was divided into infantry support groups and counter-battery combat groups. At the same time, only 0.5 sets of ammunition were issued for the offensive, and the artillery preparation for the attack was planned to be carried out over the squares for 10 minutes.

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The 1st Guards Rifle Corps at 11:30, under the cover of a heavy snowfall, took up its starting position for the offensive. At 12 o'clock, after a short fire raid, his formations moved forward. However, unexpectedly for themselves, they ran into strong enemy resistance in the areas of the Special Settlement, Verkhne-Kumskaya and Zagotskot.

Using roundabout maneuvers, the 70th Rifle Regiment captured Verkhne-Kumsky at 13.30, and the 72nd Rifle Regiment was able to occupy the March 8 collective farm by 18 o'clock. As a result, in 8 hours of combat, the forward units of the 1st Guards Corps moved forward 4-5 kilometers, having completed the immediate tasks of the divisions of the first echelon.

To build up the efforts of the advancing troops, the corps commander ordered the second echelons of the first echelon divisions to be brought into battle the next morning. However, due to the increased resistance of the enemy and the low quality of interaction between the Soviet troops, only the 24th Guards Rifle Division was able to complete the assigned tasks.

On December 26, fierce battles began for capturing the line of the Aksai River. Ahead, as before, the 24th Guards Rifle Division acted. During the day of the battle, its units, having lost 93 people killed and 158 wounded, having completed the task, destroyed up to 200 enemy soldiers and officers, captured 60 people, knocked out 9 tanks and two guns (TsAMO. F. 429, op. 5563, d. 3, l. 367).

The remaining formations of the corps, taking advantage of the success of the 24th division, were also able to make significant progress. In general, over the three days of hostilities, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps moved forward to a depth of 20–24 kilometers at a rate of 10–12 kilometers.

per day.

The enemy, behind the strong rearguards of the 2nd Infantry and 17th Panzer Divisions, began to retreat southward from December 26th. In this regard, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps received the task at 7 o'clock on December 27 to seize the line of heights located in 4 ki

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kilometers northwest of Verkhne-Yablochny (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 5639, d. 4, l. 64).

To accomplish this task, it was best to organize the pursuit of the enemy. But the corps commander did not dare to break up the battle formation into forward detachments and continued to advance in two echelons, despite the fact that formations of the 7th Panzer Corps were advancing in his zone. And only seeing that the enemy practically did not resist, it was decided to create forward detachments in each of the divisions of the first echelon. In the 24th Guards Rifle Division, a battalion of the 72nd Guards Rifle Regiment, reinforced by the 55th Tank Regiment (10 tanks) and an artillery division, was assigned to the forward detachment; in the 98th Rifle Division - the battalion of the 166th Rifle Regiment, reinforced with artillery by the SKIM DIVISION.

By 1 o'clock on December 17, units of the 7th Panzer Corps had captured Verkhne-Yablochny and started stubborn battles for enemy strongholds located on the outskirts of the Aksai River. At this time, the main enemy forces, covered by rearguards, retreated to the southern bank of this river, where they occupied prepared defense lines. Taking advantage of the actions of the tankmen, the formations of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, by the end of the day, were in possession of Nizhne-Yablochnaya, Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, Krasnoyarskaya (TsAMO. F. 429, op. 5563, d. 3, l. 367).

Thus, on December 27, the corps completed the tasks assigned to it, advancing 20-22 kilometers with the main forces, and up to 28 kilometers with advanced detachments. Particularly successful was the 72nd Guards Rifle Regiment of the 24th Guards Rifle Division, which advanced to a depth of 35 kilometers. At this time, the 7th Panzer Corps reached the approaches to Kotelnikov from the north. Other formations of the 2nd Guards Army also began to pull up there.

At 11 p.m. on December 27, the commander of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps received from the army commander the task of capturing Kotelnikovo in cooperation with the 7th Tank Corps over the next day. For her re

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In response, the corps commander decided with part of his forces (33rd Guards Rifle Division) to strike at Kotelnikovo from Nizhne-Yablochnoye, force the enemy to roll up his defenses along the western bank of the Aksai Kurmoyarsky River and ensure the actions of the main forces of the corps to capture Kotelnikovo. The main forces, bypassing Kotelnikovo from the west and east, were supposed to strike at it in converging directions, together with the tanks of the 7th Panzer Corps, and by the end of the day capture the city.

However, as happened more than once before, having gone on the offensive, the corps formations could not fully fulfill the tasks assigned to them - they failed to capture Kotelnikov. Therefore, on the evening of December 28, the commander of the 1st Guards Corps was forced to meet with the commander of the 7th Tank Corps to clarify the previously assigned tasks. It was decided by part of the forces of the 24th Guards Rifle Division to blockade this city and attack it: from the west, the 71st Guards Rifle Regiment, together with the 7th Motorized Rifle and 87th Tank Brigades of the 7th Tank Corps; The 98th Rifle Division was to capture the settlement of Nagolnaya.

The attack began at 4 am on December 29 without artillery preparation. The enemy opened heavy return fire, but because of the darkness, his artillery strikes were ineffective. Under the cover of darkness, Soviet units broke into the city from the west. At this time, the 98th Rifle Division, which bypassed Kotelnikovo from the east, together with the approaching units of the 6th mechanized corps (55th mechanized brigade) captured Nagolnaya. By 10 o'clock Kotelnikovo was completely cleared of the enemy.

After capturing Kotelnikovo, the formations of the corps continued to advance in a southerly direction, but their offensive impulse was weak. By the end of December 29, they captured Mayorovsky and Nagolnaya, 4 kilometers did not reach Semichny. At this point, they stopped and until 15:00 on December 30 put themselves in order.

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"Thus, the participation of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps in the Kotelnikovskaya operation ended. Acting in the direction of the main attack of the 2nd Guards Army, from December 24 to December 30, the corps moved forward 80 kilometers, while freeing 20 settlements. The average advance rate was 11-12 kilometers per day. According to the headquarters of the corps, during this time his formations destroyed over | thousands of soldiers and officers of the enemy, 100 people were taken prisoner. In addition, up to 70 tanks, 12 guns, 10 vehicles were destroyed, 15 tanks were captured as trophies, 60

vehicles, 26 guns, 15 aircraft, 5 food depots, a large amount of ammunition.

In turn, during the fighting from December 19 to 30, the troops of the corps lost: 24th Guards Rifle Division 488 people killed, 1542 people wounded; 98th Rifle Division killed - 29 people, wounded 10] people; 33rd Infantry Division 876 killed, 1133 wounded. In total, the corps lost 4159 people killed and wounded. In addition, 554 more people are missing and frostbitten. All this amounted to 13.5 percent of its total number (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 5639, d. 9, l. 55, 56).

Thus, the offensive of this corps in the Kotelnikovsky direction, although on the whole successful, had a number of significant shortcomings. The commanders and staffs were not able to conduct deep reconnaissance of the opposing enemy, to quickly use the capabilities of the tank troops advancing in their zone, to make extensive use of maneuver when storming settlements and other centers of enemy resistance, and to quickly organize his pursuit by all forces along parallel routes. All this ultimately led to low offensive rates and heavy casualties, and the enemy was able to systematically withdraw his forces in depth, inflicting defeat on the advancing troops at intermediate lines.

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### 13th Guards Rifle Corps

Before the start of the operation, the corps consisted of the 387th Rifle Division (commander Colonel A.K. Makarov), the 3rd Guards Rifle Division (commander Major General K.A. Tsalikov), the 49th Guards Rifle Division (commander Major General D.P. Podshivalov), 506th Corps Artillery Regiment, as well as separate sapper battalions and communications battalions. Major General P. G. Chanchi badze was appointed commander of the corps.

The formation of the formations of the corps was carried out at the expense of personnel arriving from reserve regiments, as well as from persons sent to the troops from hospitals after recovery. The latter already had combat experience. The reconnaissance units were staffed by former frontline soldiers, cadets of the Leningrad Infantry School and sailors. Training of personnel, including combat coordination of units, was carried out according to a special two-month program. Taking into account the experience of previous battles, special sniper teams were prepared at the rate of 60 people per regiment and 20 people per battalion (TsAMO).



F. 303, op. 4007, d. 4, l. 48-49).

However, it was not possible to fully implement the preliminary training program, since the bulk of the personnel of the corps formations arrived in their units only in the second half of November 1942, and already on December 5 the corps left for the front. The 387th Rifle Division was better prepared and began to form earlier than other formations. However, by November 28

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all units and formations of the corps were staffed to the state, received all the weapons and military equipment they needed. As of December 17, the corps consisted of about 40 thousand personnel, 251 guns and 819 mortars (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, file 58, sheets 45-46).

The headquarters of formations and units were poorly prepared. This came to light in the period from 22 to 24 November, when the headquarters of the 2nd Guards Army conducted command and staff exercises with the headquarters of subordinate divisions. Then it became clear that a number of officers appointed to leading staff positions ended up in them by accident, they do not know their duties and do not know how to work in operational-tactical positions (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 72, l. 3-4).

On December 17, 1942, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps received the task from the commander of the army, subordinating the 1382nd Rifle Regiment of the 87th Rifle Division to occupy the line prepared for defense along the Myshkova River from Ivanovka to Kapkinka and, having advanced the forward detachment, did not allow the enemy to break through to the north (TsAMO. F. 454, op. 7801, d. 1, l. 61).

On the same day, the 3rd Guards Rifle Division (commander Major General K. A. Tsalikov) of this corps receives the task of occupying this line of defense by December 16. This formation, reinforced by the 12th anti-tank battalion, having taken up defense on a wide front (14 kilometers), was supposed to form the vanguard of the corps, whose task was to ensure the advancement and deployment of the remaining formations. The other two divisions of this corps were still on the march at that time. With the approach of the 49th Guards Rifle Division, the width of the defense of the corps increased to 25 kilometers, stretching from Ivanovka to Tebektenerovo.

Combat operations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps began on December 19, 1942, when the enemy advance units reached the Myshkova River. In front of him were units of the 6th Panzer Division of the Germans. In the night battle on December 20, the enemy managed to capture the

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the fixed point of Vasilievka, and on December 21 by the area of height 111.8, which changed hands three times. However, on December 23, this height was recaptured by the efforts of the 5th and 13th Guards Rifle Regiments in cooperation with units of the 21st Tank Regiment of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps.

Thus, in the period from December 19 to 23, the forward formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps in heavy battles, in cooperation with other units of the 2nd Guards Army, were able to stop the enemy's advance, inflicting significant losses on him. According to the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, during this period, the enemy lost up to 800 personnel, 50 tanks, 7 guns, 135 vehicles and 6 motorcycles in the corps defense zone (TsAMO. F. 454, op. 71121, d. 1, sheets 2-7).

In connection with the decision of the army commander, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, reinforced by the 1250th anti-tank artillery regiment, the 23rd 4th Guards mortar regiments, the 1100th and 1101st cannon artillery regiments, was to advance in a secondary direction. He had the task of attacking the enemy on the front from Ivanovka to Kapkinka and seizing the line 5 kilometers south of these settlements. In the future, continuing the offensive in the indicated direction, he had to seize several heights, and capture the crossings on the Aksai River, located in the settlements of Klykov and Shestakov, with advanced units.

To accomplish this task, the corps commander decided on the morning of December 24 to break through the enemy defenses along the southern bank of the Myshkov River at a front of 7 kilometers and at 12 o'clock to capture a beam 7 kilometers south of the settlement of Ivanovka. Subsequently, developing the offensive in a southwestern direction, in cooperation with units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps and the 87th Rifle of the 51st Army, destroy the main forces of the enemy's 17th and 6th Panzer Divisions.

The formations of the corps did not go on the offensive

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at the same time. The 3rd Guards Rifle Division was to be the first to go on the offensive at 0900, and the 49th Guards Rifle Division was to join it at 1300. The 387th rifle division was withdrawn to the reserve of the army commander. The average tactical density in the offensive zone of the corps amounted to 1 kilometer front 1.1 battalions and 30 guns and mortars (caliber 76 mm and above).

Analyzing this decision, it should be noted that relatively shallow tasks were assigned to the formations and no provision was made for the advance detachments to reach the Aksai River and capture the crossings. The divisions also did not receive specific tasks on the first day of the battle. In addition, there was clearly not enough time to regroup the hull connections. In this connection, the offensive of the 3rd Guards Rifle Division did not begin at 09:00, as expected, but only at 11:30, that is, two and a half hours later than planned. The interaction of connections and parts for the same reason was also not worked out in full. Reconnaissance of the opposing enemy was carried out poorly. Neither was reconnaissance in force planned as the most effective means for opening up the forward edge of the enemy's defenses and zeroing in on his fire weapons.

For fire suppression of enemy defenses, infantry support groups consisting of one or two divisions were created in each regiment from the available artillery. In addition, in each division for counter-battery combat, there were long-range artillery groups consisting of up to one artillery regiment of 122-mm and 152-mm systems. The corps commander did not have an artillery group at his disposal, but he had the 4th Guards Mortar Regiment (Katyusha) capable of covering a significant area with its volley.

Due to the lack of data, the corps commander decided to carry out the artillery preparation of the attack not with a 10-minute fire raid, as ordered by the army commander, but to fire at the enemy for 30

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minutes to a depth of up to 5 kilometers, having used up half of the ammunition for the whole day (TsAMO. F. 454, op. 7801, d.2, l. 18).

Air preparation for the offensive of the Soviet troops (it was not planned in the interests of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps) was to be carried out by seven groups of attack aircraft in the period from 8:30 to 9:40. Consequently, in connection with the delay in the advance of the 3rd Guards Rifle Division, it had no significant significance for the corps (TsA MO. F. 346, op. 5953, d. 11, l. 454-455).

Thus, the preparation for the offensive of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps took place in a very limited time frame. The corps commander had at his disposal only five hours of time, of which four hours were dark. Under these conditions, he physically could not work out all the necessary questions in a quality manner. In view of the retreat of the rear, the troops were forced to launch an offensive

in the absence of the necessary stocks of ammunition, fuel and food.

At 08:00 on December 24, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps began to advance to its initial position for the offensive, which was located at a distance of 10 to 12 kilometers from the line of the Myshkov River. At 11:30, the 98th Rifle Division took up its initial position. At this time, the entire corps, after a 30-minute artillery preparation for the attack, went on the offensive and, without encountering strong resistance (the enemy withdrew the main forces in advance), began to advance in a southerly direction. However, after some time, the Soviet troops, having approached the first intermediate line of enemy defense, met strong resistance there and stumbled upon minefields. The hull formations were not ready for this and, having suffered losses, were forced to stop. The exchange of fire at this line continued until the end of the day.

The 98th Rifle Division, advancing on the right flank of the corps, was also stopped by the enemy in front of the intermediate line of defense and could not

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move on. However, at night, after the formations of the 7th Panzer Corps were brought into battle in this sector, the division also moved forward.

Summing up the results of the first day of the offensive, it should be noted that in 2 hours the formations of the 13th Guards Corps advanced only 4-6 kilometers, having completed only the immediate task. The main reason for this was the poor reconnaissance of the opposing enemy, who switched to a mobile defense in advance and forced the Soviet command to carry out an artillery preparation of an attack almost from scratch. But later, when the troops of the corps reached the first intermediate line, there was no more ammunition for fire suppression of the enemy defenses. It was necessary to organize a breakthrough about the intermediate line as the main one.

In the current situation, the army commander decides to send the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps to the flank of the enemy grouping in order to assist the 13th Guards Rifle Corps. As a result, the enemy was in danger of enveloping his flanks, and the German command decided on the night of December 25 to begin the withdrawal of its main forces to a new defensive line, which was being prepared along the southern bank of the Aksai River. The withdrawal of troops was covered by strong rearguards and engineering barriers.

Having assessed the situation, the army commander at 2 hours 20 minutes ordered the 13th Guards Rifle Corps to

su, in cooperation with units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, at 8 o'clock on December 25, go on a decisive offensive and at 20 o'clock on the same day seize the crossings on the Aksai River at the Zalivsky-Kruglyakov line in readiness to further advance on Chilekov (TsAMO. F. 454, inventory 7801, file 1, sheets 75-76).

The corps commander set combat missions for the 49th and 3rd Guards Rifle Divisions advancing in the first echelon to the entire depth of the corps' combat mission, despite the fact that many settlements were scattered along the banks of the Aksai River, turned by the enemy

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into powerful knots of resistance. In addition, the 1100th and 1101st cannon artillery regiments of the RGK, due to the lack of fuel for traction, could not support the offensive of the formations and had to remain in the Vasilyevka area. All parts of the corps felt a lack of ammunition and food (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4023, d. 10, l. 101).

As a result of all these shortcomings, and on December 25, the formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps did not fulfill the tasks assigned to them. Encountering enemy strongholds on their way, the corps and division commanders made the decision to attack them from the front, without using a detour maneuver with access to the flank and rear. There was no fire support for the infantry offensive, the units advanced in close combat formations, suffering unnecessary losses from enemy fire. Therefore, in 6 hours of combat operations, units of the 3rd Guards Rifle Division were able to advance only 4 kilometers, despite the fact that the tank regiments of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps reached the line of the Aksai River by the morning of December 25th. The only thing left for the corps commander was not to delay in front of the settlements, to send forward forward detachments on skis, which could, using the success of the tankers, reach this river, seize the crossings and cut off the enemy units located north of Aksai. But this did not happen, and the enemy was able to systematically retreat to the southern bank of the river, once again creating a powerful line of defense there.

With the approach of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps to the Aksai River, its commander received the task on the night of December 25-26 to change the tank regiments of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps located there and gain a foothold on the line from Zalivskaya to Kruglyakov (TsAMO. F. 4534, op. 7801, d. 1, l. 77).

To do this, it was necessary to shoot down the enemy in the strongholds located on the northern bank of the river. Therefore, by 6 o'clock in the morning, the formations of the corps with battles took possession of the settlements of Moiseev, Romashkin and Antonov,

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going to the Aksai river. The fighting to cross the river was also fierce, and only by 03:00 on 27 December was the 3rd Guards Rifle Division able to capture the settlements of Klykov, Chilekov, and Shestakov. As a result of the battles for settlements on the Aksai River, the enemy lost up to 40 tanks, 200 vehicles, 15 guns and up to 500 personnel (TsAMO. F. 454, op. 71121, file 1, sheets 2-7).

Thus, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps advanced 23 kilometers in three days of fighting at an average rate of 7-8 kilometers per day. The main reasons for such a low rate of advance should be considered the direct linearity of the actions of the Soviet troops in the absence of maneuver to the flank and rear of the enemy, poor reconnaissance of the enemy, his insufficient fire damage at intermediate lines, lack of ammunition and fuel.

The enemy, after an unsuccessful defense along the line of the Aksai River, began to retreat to Kotelnikovo. [The 3rd Guards Rifle Corps was given the task of pursuing the enemy units along the railroad line and reaching the TernoVYY state farm by 20:00 on December 27.

By that time, conclusions had already been drawn from the experience of the war on the organization of the prosecution of the enemy. As soon as the withdrawal of its units was noticed, the advanced units (detachments) consisting of cavalry, skiers or under divisions mounted on sledges should immediately be sent after them. These detachments, moving with the greatest exertion of forces along parallel roads, were supposed to preempt the enemy in retreat and occupy tactically advantageous lines located in his rear.

However, apparently, the commander of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps did not study the combat experience of past battles. Instead of proceeding to pursue the enemy along parallel routes, he continued to attack him from the front. Forward detachments were not created. The troops advanced, even without encountering enemy resistance, at a pace of 1.5 kilometers per hour. Co.

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division commanders, in turn, having received an order to attack at such a low pace to a depth of 16 to 18 kilometers, so as not to disturb the general battle order, assigned lines of alignment and the time for their passage to subordinate units, which further slowed down the pace of advance . And just because the parts

the corps advanced after the tanks of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, they managed to complete their tasks.

Thus, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps advanced until the end of December 30, until it met enemy resistance in the area of Verkhne-Vasil'evskaya and Komissarovskaya. The attack of these settlements on the move, which were defended by force up to an infantry regiment with the support of 10-15 tanks, was not successful. And only then the corps commander decided to capture them by detour from the south and north in cooperation with the approaching units of the 6th mechanized corps. This attack was successful. The enemy, having lost 10 tanks, 25 vehicles and up to 300 personnel, left these settlements and retreated to the south (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 87, l. 2).

Thus, in five days, from December 27 to December 31, 1942, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, pursuing the enemy, advanced 100 kilometers, with an average rate of about 20 kilometers per day. However, it was very difficult to actually call it persecution. The formations of the corps were conducting a frontal offensive, before which the enemy systematically withdrew his troops to the south, without putting up stubborn resistance. The advanced detachments from the corps and its formations were not sent out, and only at the final stage of the offensive was a maneuver taken to the flanks and rear of the enemy. At the same time, it should be noted that in some cases the corps command decided on night actions, which gave good results.

## 7th TANK CORPS

The 7th Tank Corps was formed in the city of Kalinin in May 1942 on the basis of the 3rd Guards Tank Brigade. It included the 3rd Guards Heavy Tank Brigade (commander Colonel Vovchenko), the 62nd Tank Brigade (commander Colonel Gumenyuk), the 8th Tank Brigade (commander Colonel Yegorov), the 7th Motorized Rifle Brigade (commander Colonel Lebedev ).

The 3rd Guards Heavy Tank Brigade consisted of three tank and one motorized rifle battalions, conventional tank brigades consisted of two tank and one motorized rifle battalions. The motorized rifle brigade had three motorized rifle battalions. The corps was commanded by Major General of Tank Troops P. A. Rotmistrov (TsAMO. F. 663, op. 388850, d. 1, l. 1).

On December 18, the corps was ordered to withdraw from the battle in the area of Nizhne-Chirskaya, Verkhne-Chirskaya, where it operated as part of the 5th shock army, to march to a new area in readiness for action in the direction of Gromoslavka, Kotelnikovo.

On December 22, the corps was transferred to the 2nd Guards-

army and received the task of preparing a counterattack in the direction of Gromoslavka and further to Vasilievka (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 1, l. 42).

By the morning of December 24, the corps had 174 tanks ready for combat, including 20 heavy KV tanks, 80 T-34 units and 66 T-70 light tanks. The corps was fully staffed with mechanics-drivers. The presence of tanks in its composition, 65% of which were superior in their combat and technical qualities

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enemy tanks, as well as motorized infantry, made it possible to solve large-scale offensive tasks.

The order to attack was received by the commander of the 7th Panzer Corps on the night of December 23-24, 1942, that is, only five hours before the start of the offensive. This time was clearly not enough to complete the entire scope of work, so the decision had to be made on the map directly at the command post of the corps, where all the commanders of subordinate brigades were called.

In accordance with the decision taken, the corps was to advance jointly with the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, destroy the opposing units of the enemy's 17th Tank and 2nd Infantry Divisions, and reach the line of the Aksai River by the end of the day. Subsequently, advance in the general direction towards Kotelnikovo.

In connection with the presence of the Aksai River corps in the offensive zone, it was decided to have its battle formation in two echelons: the 62nd and 87th tank brigades were to operate in the first, and the 3rd Guards heavy tank brigades and 7 I motorized rifle brigade. Ahead of the units of the first echelon, units of the 98th Infantry Division were to advance. Such a combat order ensured the delivery of a strong initial strike and the development of success in depth by introducing a strong second echelon. At the same time, the actions of tanks together with infantry always presented certain difficulties and required the organization of careful interaction.

By dawn on December 24, the 62nd and 87th tank brigades prepared advance routes to the Myshkova River and crossing it. At 8 o'clock, in conditions of heavy snowfall, they began to advance from their areas of concentration to the crossings. The movement was carried out in marching columns, in front of which anti-tank batteries moved. One route was determined for each brigade to advance. The motorized rifle battalions of the brigades moved behind the tank battalions. The exit of tanks to the deployment line for the attack was covered by the actions of the units of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps that were in front.



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At 12 o'clock, after a 19-minute artillery raid, the tank brigades of the 7th Tank Corps went on the offensive against the enemy. But already in the first minutes it became clear that the artillery, which fired at the squares, could not suppress the firing points of the enemy. In addition, the pace of the offensive of the Soviet troops was reduced due to the presence of steep ravines, snowdrifts and minefields in the zone of action of tank brigades. Therefore, in the first eight hours, the tank brigades were able to advance only four to five kilometers, with an average pace of 500-600 meters per hour.

The army commander, in order to fulfill the task of the day, at 20 o'clock ordered the second echelons of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps (TsAMO. F. 429, op. 451, d. 1, l. 381) to be brought into battle.

As night fell, the fighting continued. The tanks of the 62nd and 87th tank brigades bypassed the minefields laid in the depths of the enemy's defenses and, in cooperation with the 98th division, by 2 o'clock in the morning captured the line of the task of the day, after which the personnel began servicing military equipment. The heavy tank brigade, having made a night march, by 12 o'clock on the first day of the offensive concentrated in the Nizhne-Kumsky area in readiness to be put into battle.

On December 25, reconnaissance established the withdrawal of enemy units in a southwestern direction to the line of the Aksai River under the cover of strong rearguards. The Soviet units began to pursue them, pushing forward strong forward detachments. At the same time, the direction of the main attack was shifted and chosen at the place of the weakest resistance of the enemy. Such a place turned out to be the areas defended by units of the 2nd Infantry Division of Romania.

By the end of December 25, the 62nd Tank Brigade, in cooperation with the 24th Rifle Brigade, reached the Aksai River and occupied Novoaksaisky. However, the attempts of the Soviet troops to cross this river on the move were unsuccessful, all of them were repelled by enemy fire from the opposite bank.

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The enemy burned all the bridges in advance, and mined the coast (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 5639, d. 1, l. 18).

Thus, the task of the second day of the offensive was not completed. The corps actually attacked with only one 62nd tank brigade. The 87th tank brigade was never able to get out of the battle. 3rd Guards Heavy Tank

The military brigade, being in the second echelon of the corps, was preparing to repulse possible enemy counterattacks. The 7th motorized rifle brigade made a march from the former concentration area throughout the whole day and only at the end of the day was able to take part in the battles to capture Novoaksayskaya.

In the evening of that day, the enemy's withdrawal from the line of the Aksai River in the direction of Kotelnikovo was discovered. But on December 26, the corps commander received an order from the commander of the 2nd Guards Army to continue the offensive in the direction of Verkhne-Yablochny and Kotelnikovo in the morning.

After evaluating the situation, the commander of the 7th Panzer Corps decided to launch the offensive at 7 am and capture Verkhne-Yablochny by 12 pm, and take Kotelnikovo by the end of the day. To do this, the 3rd Guards Tank Brigade was sent to the first echelon to help the 62nd Tank Brigade. These brigades, breaking away from the infantry accompanying them, had to carry out the assigned task on their own. The 87th tank brigade was supposed to secure the right flank of the corps, in readiness to repel counterattacks from the Potemkinskaya area.

At 6 am on December 26, a reconnaissance detachment of the 62nd Tank Brigade captured the bridge over the Aksai River near the village of Generalovskaya. Along it, as well as along the ford in the Novoaksaiskaya area, under the cover of anti-tank artillery fire, the tanks of both brigades of the first echelon crossed the Aksai. In the battles on its southern coast, about 300 prisoners were captured, a large amount of weapons and ammunition. Starting the offensive, by 9 o'clock they reached the boundary of the nearest dacha.

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At this time, the commander of the 87th tank brigade, unexpectedly for the enemy, attacked the village of Potemkinskaya. The attack was so unexpected that the Germans fled in panic from the village, abandoning their equipment and weapons (Tsami. F. 3, op. 437799, d. 2, l. 34).

The enemy in the main direction began to retreat with fighting, carrying out counterattacks in separate directions. One of these counterattacks, with forces of up to 30 tanks supported by infantry, was carried out on the flank of the corps, but, having lost several tanks, the enemy was forced to stop the offensive. By the end of December 26, parts of the corps were concentrated in the Verkhne-Yablochny area.

According to intelligence information, it became known that the enemy was creating defenses along the bank of the Aksai Kurmoyarsky River and withdrawing troops there under the cover of rearguards. On the night of December 26-27, the army commander ordered

7th Panzer Corps in the morning to continue the attack on Kotelnikovo. The rest of the army units were ordered to advance in a southerly direction. Thus, the corps received an independent task, which had to be solved on its own.

The corps commander decided, without changing the order of battle, to continue the offensive and capture Kotelnikov at 20:00. Two battalions of the 7th motorized rifle brigade were allocated to cover the right flank. The 87th tank brigade with the third battalion of the 7th motorized rifle brigade were left in the combined arms reserve. The rationality of this decision consisted in the fact that it did not take time to change the battle order of the corps, despite the fact that reliable support was achieved for its right flank and a sufficient number of forces in the reserve in case of solving suddenly arising tasks.

Kotelnikovo was a powerful center of defense. The bridges across the Aksai Kurmoyarsky River were prepared for an explosion, the approaches to the city were mined, and up to 30 tanks and an infantry battalion took refuge in Kotelnikov itself. Capturing such a node was not easy.

The next stage of the offensive began at 8 a.m.

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27th of December. When advancing to the deployment line, the Soviet units were subjected to massive enemy air strikes. Therefore, their attack from this line began only at 11 o'clock. The battles for the heights located on the outskirts of Kotelnikov lasted for several hours. Only after that did the enemy leave their positions and withdraw to a new defensive line.

The attack on Kotelnikovo continued until dark. By 11 pm, the advanced tanks of the 62nd Tank and 3rd Guards Heavy Tank Brigades reached a line located 2.5 kilometers north of Kotelnikov, but, having met strong enemy resistance, they were forced to stop the offensive. In addition, it turned out that both fuel and ammunition in the tanks were running out. Therefore, the commander, having decided to consolidate the achieved line with motorized infantry, ordered the tanks to be withdrawn to the rear for their refueling and replenishment of ammunition themselves.

By this time, the 7th motorized rifle brigade had captured the village of Tsygan and captured the crossing over the Aksai Kurmoyarsky River. The rest of the formations also completed their tasks, which created the conditions for a decisive assault on Kotelnikov.

It was found that in the area of \u200b\u200bGypsies, Romanian units were defending, less staunch in defense than the Germans.

cue. The corps commander decided to take advantage of this circumstance and deliver the main blow in this direction. To do this, he ordered the commanders of the 87th tank brigade with a battalion of the 7th motorized rifle brigade, acting in the direction of Verkhne-Yablochny, Tsygan, Mayorsky, to force the Aksai Kurmoyarsky river and attack Kotelnikovo from the west at dawn on December 28. At the same time, units of the 62nd Tank and 3rd Guards Heavy Tank Brigades were to attack the city from the north and east.

The approach of the tanks of the 87th tank brigade with armored infantry to the southern bank of Aksai Kurmoyarsky was completely unexpected for the enemy. A car was seized, from the driver of which it became known about cash

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chii airfield in the area. The tank battalion of Captain N. V. Ananchenko broke into its territory and captured about 20 aircraft and a large supply of aerial bombs, as well as 800 barrels of fuel (TsAMO. F. 6501, op. 382875, d. 1, l. 16— 20).

Having captured the airfield, units of the 87th Tank Brigade continued their offensive on Kotelnikovo. Two more brigades of the 7th Panzer Corps approached him from the north and east. By 13:00, the advanced Soviet units reached the outskirts of Kotelnikov, but were stopped by strong enemy oncoming fire. However, despite the strong resistance of the enemy, by 1800 hours all the brigades of the first echelon of the 7th Panzer Corps broke into the city.

The battle in the city continued throughout the night from 28 to 29 December. By the morning of December 29, Kotelnikovo was cleared of the enemy. In the period from December 24 to 29, units of the 7th Panzer Corps, advancing 70-80 kilometers, destroyed several hundred enemy soldiers and officers, 300 people were captured. In addition, 25 tanks, 65 guns and mortars of various calibers, and many other military equipment were destroyed. During this time, the corps itself lost 14 tanks, the rest needed minor repairs, and the personnel needed rest. Therefore, the army commander decided to concentrate the 7th tank corps in the Kotelnikov area in order to restore its combat capability.

For skillful actions in the battles for Kotelnikovo, a large group of fighters and commanders of the 7th tank corps was awarded orders and medals, and the corps itself was renamed the 3rd Guards van on January 24, 1943, and was awarded an honorary name "Kotelnikovsky". The corps commander, General P. A. Rotmistrov, was among the first generals of the Soviet Army to be awarded the newly established Order of Suvorov, 2nd class. At the same time he was

promoted to the rank of lieutenant general of tank troops.

## 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps

The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps (commander Major General V.P. Sviridov, chief of staff Colonel Kreslavsky) by the morning of December 16, making a march, reached the line of Nizhne-Tsaritsynsky, Buzinovka, the Novy Put collective farm. Due to the lack of fuel, the personnel of the mechanized brigades marched on foot.

On that day, the army commander, on the basis of his decision, ordered the corps commander to march to the Zeta area and by the morning of December 17, take up defense at the line of Kapkinsky, Abganerovo station, Plodovitoe, ENGAGING WITH THE 87th rifle division, which was defending in the Kapkinsky area. The corps was supposed to be ready in cooperation with two tank brigades of the 51st Army, located in the Gniloaksayskaya area, to deliver counterattacks in one of two directions to Gromoslavka or Kapkinsky (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 23114, d. 1, sheet 46).

Fulfilling the task received, the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps on the night of December 17 began advancing to the indicated line, but did not complete the task at the indicated time: all rifle subunits continued to move on foot. Due to the lagging behind of the army's rear, the fuel in the corps was coming to an end, there was one ammunition for small arms and two ammunition for tanks. The fuel received was only enough to move forward detachments (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 23114, d. 3, l. 20).

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By the end of December 7, the enemy, having broken the resistance of the 20th anti-tank fighter brigade, began to develop an offensive in the direction of Gromoslavka. At this time, the advanced units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps were just beginning to concentrate in the area of the Zeta and Yurkin state farms. Only forward detachments, consisting of reinforced motorized rifle battalions, were advanced to the area of the Abganerovo station.

During the period of intense fighting from December 20 to 23, the corps advanced three times to the most threatened line, making marches of 40-50 kilometers during the night. In the absence of proper material support, especially fuel, the personnel had to move on foot, which greatly exhausted the people.

In accordance with the decision of the army commander of the 2nd

the guards mechanized corps was to advance after a 10-minute fire raid in cooperation with the 7th tank and 13th guards rifle corps in the direction of Gromoslavka.

As of December 20, the corps consisted of just over 17,000 personnel, 195 tanks (including 118 T-34s and 76 T-70s), 74 armored vehicles, 173 guns and mortars (caliber 76 mm and above), 8 combat vehicles of rocket artillery M-13. To move people and material values, the corps had a little more than 1400 trucks and special vehicles and 19 tractors.

The start of the attack was scheduled for 12:00 on December 24, 1942.

In accordance with the decision taken, the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps began to advance along the established routes and cross the Myshkova River. But by 8 o'clock on December 24 the crossing was not completed, and the corps occupied the starting area only by 12 o'clock 30 minutes, when the neighboring 7th tank corps also completed the crossing. By this time, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, with divisions of the first echelon, was fighting at the Verkhne-Kumsky, Zagotskot line, height 121.3, where they met stubborn resistance against

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nick, and the neighbor on the left, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, which went on the offensive at 11:30 a.m. and since then has advanced 4-6 km, also met stubborn resistance from the enemy (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 23114 s, file 3, sheet 33; list 296261 s, file 13, sheet 20).

As a result of the advance of individual formations of the corps, conditions were created for a strike on the flank of the enemy defending in the area of the meadow, Koronnaya gully, Osipov gully. Therefore, the army commander ordered the tank regiments of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps to strike in this direction and, in cooperation with the formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, defeat the enemy in the indicated area, preventing him from retreating to the river. Aksai.

To deliver this strike, the corps commander decided to use four tank regiments with assault troops of automatchiks, taking two regiments from his reserve and two regiments from the brigades of the first echelon. The mechanized brigades of the first echelon formations were to advance rapidly behind the tank regiments.

At 1530 hours the 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 25th Guards Tank Regiments, together with subdivisions of machine gunners, launched a decisive offensive in the indicated direction. The enemy, resisting

ing, sought to delay the attack of tanks, but under blows from the front of units of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps and from the flank of units of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, he began to hastily withdraw the main forces to the southern bank of the Aksai River.

In order to prevent the retreating enemy from easily retreating across the Aksai River and organizing defenses along its southern bank, at the end of December 24, the army commander ordered the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, in cooperation with the formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, to move on to a decisive pursuit the enemy and by the morning of December 25, capture the crossings across the Aksai River in the Zalivsky, Krug Lyakov sector. With the completion of this task, the troops of the corps were withdrawn to the second echelon of the army and were to concentrate

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sharpening in the Zagotskot area, Neklinskaya gully to solve subsequent problems (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, file 60, sheet 44).

Thus, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps played a decisive role in defeating the enemy at the first stage of hostilities with the swift actions of tank regiments. But, due to the fact that the mechanized brigades did not enter the battle, the corps could not fully fulfill the assigned task on the first day of the battle. There were several main reasons for this. Firstly, the formations of the corps were detained at the crossings across the Myshkova River and did not reach the starting area in time. Secondly, rifle units advanced on foot. And since they had to make a march on the night before the offensive and advance at a rapid pace behind the tank regiments, this led to the lagging of the infantry behind the tanks and the disruption of coordinated actions during the offensive. Thirdly, weather conditions played a certain role in this. Poor visibility due to thick fog, snowdrifts, and lack of roads hampered the actions of troops, especially tanks, artillery and vehicles, and slowed down the pace of the offensive.

With the onset of darkness, the enemy began to withdraw the main forces to the line of the Aksai River, holding back the offensive of the Soviet troops with strong rearguards, consisting of infantry and tanks. And also barriers. Under these conditions, the corps commander, following the order of the army commander, decided to go out to the Aksai river with tank regiments with infantry landings during the night, seize the crossings in the Klykov, Kruglyakov sector, cross this river on the move and ensure further actions [3rd Guards rifle corps. The mechanized brigades were given the task of advancing behind the tank regiments. The actions of the tank regiments were supported by one division of the 117th Guards Corps.

a small artillery regiment and the 45th guards mortar battalion.

During the night of December 25th 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 25th

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the guards tank regiments, together with the landing forces, went to the northern bank of the Aksai river, and the mechanized brigades on foot reached the Neklinskaya gully. But the rear, due to a lack of fuel, continued to remain on the northern bank of the Myshkova River, which greatly complicated the material support of the units. By the morning of December 25, the mechanized brigades had no fuel even to move artillery.

At 07:40 on December 25, tank regiments, supported by artillery, went on the attack in the Moi seev-Kruglyakov sector. At the same time, the 25th Guards Tank Regiment attacked the enemy in Moiseev, reached its eastern outskirts and captured the crossing across the Aksai River. The 23rd Guards Tank Regiment attacked the enemy in the direction of Shestakov, reached its western outskirts and also captured the crossing. The 21st Guards Tank Regiment captured the Antonov area. The 22nd Guards Tank Regiment crossed the Aksai River on the move and reached the village of Kruglyakov.

The enemy offered stubborn resistance, concentrating strong anti-tank fire on the tanks. Tank regiments suffered heavy losses. The mechanized brigades of the corps and rifle formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps lagged behind. In this regard, the corps commander decided to withdraw all tank regiments to the northern bank of the Aksai River, yielding to the enemy the previously created bridgeheads.

Meanwhile, the neighbor on the right, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, together with the 7th Tank Corps, overcame enemy resistance at the turn of the March 8 collective farm, Zagotskot, and also went to the Aksai River in the Generalovsky, Zalivsky section. By the evening of December 25, the motorized rifle battalions of the mechanized brigades of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps also began to go there. The corps commander decided to take advantage of this and perform a night attack to fulfill the previously assigned combat mission. At the same time, the battle formation was built in two echelons: in the first echelon, the 6th and 4th Guards mechanized brigade were to advance

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reptiles together with the 21st and 22nd Guards Tank Regiments, in the second - the 5th Guards Mechanized Brigade. At the same time, the 6th Guards Mechanized



The tank brigade was to destroy the enemy in the Moiseev area and reach the Aksai River in readiness to ensure the crossing of the troops of the 13th Guards Mechanized Corps. The 4th Guards Mechanized Brigade was given the task of capturing the Shestakov area and reaching its southern outskirts. The 21st and 22nd Guards Tank Regiments, securing the left flank of the corps, were to capture the area of Antonov and Kruglyakov and hold them until the infantry units approached.

On the night of December 26, the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps went on the attack. The enemy defended stubbornly. Particularly fierce fighting ensued on the northern outskirts of Moiseev and in the area of Shestakov. While fighting, units of riflemen and machine gunners infiltrated the flanks and rear of the enemy, suddenly attacked him and ensured the advance of tanks.

The personnel of the corps in this battle showed examples of heroism and courage. So, in the battle for the Shestakov farm, the rifle company of the 4th Guards Mechanized Brigade, led by Senior Lieutenant Gerasimov, captured the enemy's anti-tank battery. The enemy's guns were turned in his direction. Their fire burned a car and knocked out two anti-tank guns. enemy. The driver of the same brigade, sergeant Topchanov, got out of his burning tank, started an enemy car with a gun on a trailer, put the wounded comrades on the car and left the battlefield, having managed to save the lives of his comrades and capture trophies (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 296261 s, file 13, sheet 22).

The enemy concentrated strong anti-tank fire on the battle formations of the 21st Guards Tank Regiment, and the regiment, having suffered losses, was detained. Then the commander of the 1st company of this regiment, Senior Lieutenant Smirnov, following ahead of his unit, went to the flank and destroyed the enemy battery with fire and caterpillars, ensuring the successful actions of the regiment to capture

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Kruglyakov settlement area (TsAMO. Fond 603, op. 296261 s, d. 13, l. 23, 24).

By the fall of December 26, after stubborn fighting, the brigades and tank regiments of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps completed their assigned tasks and reached the indicated line: the 6th Guards Mechanized Brigade occupied Moiseev and Shestakov; 4th Guards Mechanized Brigade - Shestakov, Antonov. After completing their mission, the 21st and 22nd Guards Tank Regiments were relieved by units of the 4th Guards Mechanized Brigade and withdrawn to the reserve in the area of the Krutaya beam. The 5th Guards Mechanized Brigade, making up the second echelon of the corps, concentrated in the area of the Krutaya gully and the Shirokaya gully. [17th Guards-

The corps artillery regiment of two battalions occupied firing positions three kilometers north of Shestakov, and its third battalion lagged behind due to lack of fuel. The 45th Guards Mortar Battalion deployed at firing positions two kilometers north of Shestakov (TsAMO. Fond 603, op. 23114 s, d. 3, l. 40).

During the night battles, the enemy suffered significant losses. Two tanks were destroyed, a battery of anti-tank guns, 23 vehicles with infantry, up to 200 soldiers and officers were killed. As a result of the battle, 12 vehicles, 5 anti-tank guns, and one tank were captured. At the same time, parts of the corps suffered minor losses in manpower and equipment. Mechanized brigades lost up to 30 people killed and wounded, and tank regiments - 26 tanks. Experts believed that these losses could have been even less if the tank regiments had not had to cross the Aksai River twice (TsAMO. op. 23114 s, d. 3, l. 40-41). F. 603

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On the morning of December 26, the 1st Guards Rifle Corps crossed the river on the right flank with units of the 24th Guards Rifle Division. Aksai and fought at the turn of Generalovsky, Zalivsky. The 13th Guards Rifle Corps, overcoming obstacles and the resistance of retreating enemy groups, also reached the Aksai River.

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Thus, by the morning of December 26, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps completed its task, having advanced in two days to a depth of 24-26 kilometers, with an average advance rate of 12-13 kilometers per day.

Particularly noteworthy is the night attack of the corps troops, which was characterized both by an offensive from the front and bypasses of enemy strongholds from the flanks. At the same time, it should be noted that during the battle at the turn of the Aksai River, a number of shortcomings were also revealed. In particular, enemy reconnaissance was conducted poorly. Therefore, the corps commander did not have sufficient data to make a rational decision, and when approaching the Aksai River, the enemy defenses, especially anti-tank ones, were not completely opened, resulting in significant losses of tanks. Tank regiments during the period of pursuit and battle on the Aksai River were weakly supported by artillery and were not reinforced by escort artillery. The mechanized brigades lagged behind the tanks, as a result of which they could not use their success. The use of four tank regiments in the first echelon in the night attack on December 26 was also not entirely justified. Such excessive massing of tanks on a narrow section of the front led to unnecessary losses.

The corps commander exercised control by giving orders by radio and through communications officers. But

radio communication was not always stable, especially with the beginning of the pursuit of the enemy. Therefore, the commanders of mechanized brigades had intermittent communication with tank regiments, which often led to the fact that tank regiments did not always receive tasks in a timely manner and acted on their own initiative, in accordance with the situation. The troops of the corps experienced an acute shortage of fuel and ammunition. The available supplies were running out, and the rifle subunits were forced to pursue the enemy on foot.

A large failure of tanks required a quick organization of repair work. The repair and restoration battalion of the corps created five

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repair teams, which by the end of December 26 restored 5 T-34 tanks and 3 T-70 tanks.

On the night of December 26, reconnaissance discovered the retreat of the enemy in the direction of Kotelnikov. He continued to hold the line of the Aksai River with strong rearguards detached from the 17th and 23rd Panzer Divisions. In an effort to delay the advance of our troops, the enemy launched counterattacks with infantry and tanks.

At 11 p.m. on December 25, the army commander decided to strike with the right flank of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps and the 7th Tank Corps in the direction of Generalovsky, Kotelnikovo, and with the introduction of the 6th Mechanized Corps from the line of Aksai, Peregruzny on the morning of December 26 in the direction of Zhutov-2, Darganov in order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing and defeat him in the Kotelnikov area. The 7th Panzer Corps was given the task of advancing in the direction of Generalovsky, Verkhne Yablochny and by the end of the day, with strong forward detachments, to capture Kotelnikovo and the Gremyachaya station. The 1st Guards Rifle Corps was to take advantage of the success of the 7th Tank Corps and, by 20:00 on December 26, capture the line of heights with marks 72.8, 124.7 and 135.4. The operational formation of the strike group was envisaged in two echelons. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was supposed to make up its second echelon, in accordance with which, after being replaced by the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, it was supposed to leave the battlefield and concentrate in the Verkhne-Kumsky area, the March 8 collective farm (TsAMO. F 303, inventory 4005, file 60, sheet 31).

However, on the night of December 26, formations of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps could not reach the Aksai River and change the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps. His troops were belatedly relieved only by the morning of 27 December.

By December 27, due to the successful actions | and 3rd

of the Guards armies of the Southwestern Front, which reached the line of Skosyrskaya, Morozovsky, Chernyshkovsky, and the offensive of the troops of the 2nd Guards Army in the Kotelnikovsky direction, favorable conditions were created

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for the final defeat of the enemy's Tormosino grouping, which created the threat of a breakthrough to the grouping of German troops surrounded near Stalingrad. In a telegram addressed to the commander of the 2nd Guards Army, the Supreme Commander drew attention to the need to eliminate this threat. By order of the General Staff, the troops of this army, in cooperation with the 5th shock army, were to force the Don River in the Krasnoyarsky, Upper Kurmoyarskaya sector and strike in the direction of Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, Tormosin. The main blow in the zone of the 2nd Guards Army was to be delivered by the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, on the flanks of which rifle divisions were to operate.

Thus, the decision provided for, without waiting for the approach of the troops of the 5th shock army, a blow to the flank of the enemy from the southeast, in cooperation with the troops of the Southwestern Front, to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy in the Tormosin area. The bridgehead to ensure the crossing of the Don River by the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was to be captured by the 33rd Guards Rifle Division of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps. Under those conditions, it was expedient, since the crossing of such a river as the Don (width up to 300 m, depth 4-5 m, ice thickness 30-40 cm) by tank units had to be ensured by capturing the opposite bank and setting up crossings.

In order to solve the assigned task, the army commander at 20:00 on December 27 ordered the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps to go to the Generalovsky, Dorofeevsky, Novoaksaysky district and a strong forward detachment, together with the 33rd Guards Rifle Division, to capture the settlements of Krasnoyarsky and Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya. The 33rd Guards Rifle Division was to capture the existing crossings across the Don River in the Krasnoyarsky, Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya sector in readiness to force the Don (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 60, l. 34).

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To solve it, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps concentrated on the night of December 28 in the indicated area. His forward detachment, consisting of a tank regiment and a motorized rifle battalion of the 5th Guards Mechanized

The bathroom brigade, together with units of the 33rd Guards Rifle Division, reached the western outskirts of Verkh non-Kurmoyarskaya, defeating units of the 18th Infantry Division of the Royal Romanian troops. By that time, the main forces of the army were successfully advancing in the direction of Kotelnikovo, where the troops of the 7th tank and 6th mechanized corps also entered.

But the enemy continued to hold Kotelnikovo. Its aviation, having intensified its activity, carried out strikes against the troops of the army, especially against the second echelons and reserves. Up to 11 raids were carried out against the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps by groups of 3-7 aircraft.

At 10 o'clock on December 28, the army commander orders the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps to prepare crossings across the river by 12 o'clock on December 29. Don in the Krasnoyarsky, Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya sector and be ready for an attack on Tormosin.

The 33rd Guards Rifle Division was to force the Don River at Krasnoyarsky, Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya at 8:00 on December 29 and capture the Chepurin and Aginov line by 18:00 of the same day. For the period of forcing the Don River by the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, the 33rd Guards Rifle Division was reassigned to the commander of this corps. The rest of the army corps were tasked with the final defeat of the Kotelnikovskaya enemy grouping (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 60, l. 36).

By 4 o'clock on December 29, the 7th Tank Corps and the approaching troops of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps defeated the enemy in the Kotelnikov area with a surprise attack from the southwest and north, and by 10 o'clock the city was completely liberated. By the end of that day, army troops reached the line of Mayorsky, Semichny, Nagolny, Budarka. Thus, the fighting of the troops of the 2nd

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guards army in the Kotelnikov operation ended successfully. The main task of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was to defeat the enemy's Tormosino grouping.

In accordance with the task received, the 33rd Guards Rifle Division at dawn on December 29 crossed the Don River on ice in the indicated sector, seized the opposite bank on the move and began to advance in the direction of Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya, Zhirny. Under these conditions, the corps commander decided, in order to cross the Don with his troops, to equip two crossings for tanks and two for artillery and vehicles.

After inspecting the river, engineering reconnaissance was

It was decided that in order to cross tanks it was necessary to build bridges or reinforce the ice by laying logs and boards. But for the construction of the bridge, the corps did not have the necessary forces and means. Therefore, it was decided to strengthen the ice, for which boards and logs were used, which were taken from the destroyed buildings of the nearest settlements. In connection with the great activity of enemy aviation, the army commander ordered the advance of the corps to the area of the crossing to begin at nightfall on the night of December 30th. Air cover was to be provided by two regiments of the 15th anti-aircraft artillery division. For a more thorough organization of the combat operations of the army troops during the defeat of the Tormosinskaya grouping, the 2nd Guards Mechanized, 33rd Guards and 387th Rifle Divisions were brought together in a group under the command of Deputy Commander of the 2nd Guards Army, Major General Ya G. Kreizer (TsAMO. F. 603 d.2, L. 1).

, op. 23114,

At 3 o'clock on December 30, the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, having made a march, began the crossing. However, at the first attempt to transport the T-34 tanks across the Don, the ice could not stand it. The first tank went under the ice. Major General Ya. G. Kreizer, who was present at the same time, ordered the T-34 tanks to be left on the east coast to

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bridge, continue the crossing with the rest of the forces (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 296261, d. 13, l. 29, 30).

By 1 p.m. on December 30, the troops of the corps had completed their crossing of the Don and concentrated in the indicated areas. Deported in the direction of Berezka, the Podolkhov reconnaissance detachment as part of the reconnaissance company of the corps established that the settlements of Berezka and Balabanovskiy were being defended by units of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 7th Air Field Division of the enemy. By that time, units of the 33rd Guards Rifle Division were already fighting at the Semenov-Aksenov line. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps itself, having regrouped on the right flank of the army, was ready for action in the Tormosinsky direction. But it was weakened by the fact that 103 T-34 tanks, which constituted the main strike force of this formation, were left on the eastern bank, and only 73 T-70 tanks were transferred to the western bank of the Don.

At the same time, enemy units defending in the Tormosin area were badly battered in previous battles and had a weak composition. Thus, only 400 personnel and up to 15 20-mm guns remained in the ranks of the 7th Air Field Division. The marching companies, which were defending in front of the front of the 33rd Guards Rifle Division, had a total of about 300 soldiers and officers. The enemy was building a focal defense, described

raiding settlements. There were no prepared positions and lanes. Artillery and mortar fire was prepared and patrols were set up between the strongholds in separate areas (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 58, l. 50).

Major General Ya. G. Kreizer, based on the instructions of the army commander, decided to deliver the main blow in the direction of Belozersky, Morskoy, Tormosin in order to defeat the enemy defending there and, by the end of December 31, capture the areas of Zakharov, Tormosin. In the light of this decision, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps was to defeat the enemy in the area of Berezka, Podolkhovskiy and, developing the offensive

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to Tormosin, in cooperation with the 387th Rifle Division and formations of the 5th Shock Army, to capture this settlement. The 33rd Guards Rifle Division was to advance in the direction of Semyonov and Novotymlyanskaya.

At 5 o'clock on December 30, the corps commander assigned tasks to the formations, building it in two echelons and creating a strong forward detachment. A significant part of the T-70 tanks from the 21st, 22nd and 24th Guards Tank Regiments was allocated to the forward detachment, and Colonel Kirichenko, deputy corps commander, was placed at its head. He received the task, acting in the direction of Chepurin, Belozersky bypass from the west, in cooperation with mechanized brigades, to destroy the enemy in the Tormosin area. The start of the offensive was scheduled for 20:00 on December 30 (TsAMO. F. 603, op. 23114, file 2, sheet 106).

Thus, the plan of the corps commander was to use the main forces to make a deep detour maneuver and reach the flank and rear of the defending enemy and, in cooperation with the 387th Infantry Division, defeat his main forces in the Tormosin area. Two mechanized brigades were involved in the bypass, up to 80% of the tanks available on the western bank of the Don River. The corps commander concentrates a significant part of the tanks in his hands to act as a forward detachment. In addition, forward detachments consisting of 53-10 T-70 tanks and submachine gunners were created in mechanized brigades to capture important objects on the flanks and in the depths of the enemy defenses.

Under these conditions, it was especially important to carefully organize the coordinated actions of the troops of the corps. The brigades from two directions were to reach Gormosin at the same time and, by joint efforts, capture this enemy fortified point. The corps commander indicated the lines to which the troops should go,

control of blows when approaching Tormosin. was warned

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a detour by part of the forces from the west was viewed to cover Tormosin from three sides.

Before the offensive, the corps commander decided to conduct reconnaissance in force with the forces of two motorized rifle battalions. These battalions were supposed to force the enemy to open fire with all the means at his disposal and thereby mark their location on the ground (Archive of the Moscow Region, fund 603, op. 296261 s, d. 13, l. 33).

At nightfall on December 30, two motorized rifle battalions (one each from the 5th and 6th Guards Mechanized Brigades) with five T-70 tanks bypassed the enemy stronghold in the Berezka area from two sides and captured it with a sudden blow. The enemy began to hastily retreat to the northwest, abandoning weapons and equipment.

Under these conditions, the corps commander decides, using the success of the actions of the outflanking detachments, to go on the offensive with all his forces in the direction of Berezka, Podolkhovsky. To this end, advanced detachments from the 5th and 6th Guards Mechanized Brigades were sent along the indicated route with the task of reaching Stepan-Razinskaya, preventing the enemy from withdrawing in the direction of Tormosin. The advanced detachment of the corps was sent in the direction of Balabanovskiy, Morskoy.

The advanced detachment of the corps, in cooperation with the advanced battalions, by the morning of December 31 broke into Balabanovskiy and captured it. Conditions were created for a quick exit to the Tormosin area. At 8 o'clock on December 31, all the troops of General Kreizer's group went over to the offensive in the Tormosin direction. Troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps pursued the enemy. The advanced detachments of brigades and corps acted ahead. Mechanized brigades followed them in marching columns with security equipment (TsAMO. FO. 603 op. 23114, s, d. 8, l. 65; F. 303, op. 4005, d. 72, l. 16).

By 4 p.m., the advance detachment of the mechanized group took possession of Stepano-Razinsky with a sudden blow, destroying up to 70 enemy soldiers and officers. Before

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The howling detachment of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps by this time started a battle in the area of the village of Morskaya. The enemy tried to hold this strong point and put up stubborn resistance. It was only possible to take



out to the flank, but the forward detachment could not pursue further due to lack of fuel. The enemy managed to retreat and took up defensive positions in advance prepared positions along the heights southwest and south of Tormosin and captured this settlement with a surprise attack.

But on this day, the fighting of the corps was distinguished by swiftness and great maneuverability. During the day, his troops, overcoming enemy resistance, advanced to a depth of 40 kilometers, defeated enemy units in the Zakharov, Morskoy, Balabanovskiy areas, and by the end of the day captured Tormosin. In the battle for this settlement, the enemy only lost more than 800 soldiers and officers killed. In addition, the Soviet troops captured large trophies, since the supply base of the Don Army Group was located in Tormosin (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 72, l. 16).

After capturing Tormosin, the commander of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps decided to gain a foothold on the captured line, sending forward an advanced detachment in the direction of the village of Aleshkinsky. By the end of December 31, the formations of the group of General Kreizer reached the line Tarasinsky, Popov, Zakharov, Tormosin, Semenov, Budarin.

The successful actions of the troops of the Southwestern Front and part of the forces of the 2nd Guards Army of the Stalingrad Front in the Tormosino direction created a threat of encirclement of the enemy grouping northwest of Tormosino. Therefore, the German command began to hastily WITHDRAWAL of its troops from this area in a southwestern direction, having lost their last hopes of helping the encircled troops near Stalingrad.

But the Soviet command did not abandon the plan to encircle the enemy grouping in the Tormosin area. Therefore, at the end of the day on December 31, the commander of the 2nd Guards

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ordered the troops of General Kreizer's group to decisively pursue the retreating enemy in the direction of Tormosin, Chernyshkovsky, acting towards the shock group of troops of the Southwestern Front. Troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps received the task of pursuing the enemy in the direction of Tormosin, Logovsky and towards the end | January to reach the Logovsky line (5410), Verkhne-Gnutov. The 387th Rifle Division was to attack on the right, and the 33rd Guards Rifle Division was to operate on the left in the direction of Novo-Tsymlyanskaya (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d 60, l. 4).

The corps commander, based on the order of the army commander, decided to attack and destroy the enemy

nick in the Aleshkinsky area (4624), height. 83.4 (4414), Akolzin (4424) and, developing the offensive in the direction of Logovsky, by the end of the day, capture the indicated line. The battle order of the corps was built in two echelons: in the first echelon of the 4th and 5th Guards. mechanized brigades, in the second - the 6th Guards. mechanized brigade. Corps artillery remained under the command of brigade commanders.

The advanced detachment of the corps was to go to the rear of the defending enemy, bypassing Akolzin from the southwest.

The corps commander assigned the following tasks to the corps troops:

4th Guards mechanized brigade with one division of the 1117th Guards. corps artillery regiment should take possession of Aleshkinsky on the move and, pursuing the enemy, by the end of the day reach the line of Logovsky, Soko LOV.

At dawn | On January 1943, the enemy, with up to two infantry battalions with tanks, launched a counterattack from the side of Akolzin, but it was thwarted by units of two motorized rifle battalions of the 4th and 5th Guards Mechanized Brigades. Then, after a five-minute fire raid and two volleys from the Guards mortar battalion, the main forces of these brigades went over to the attack. The enemy, having lost up to 250 soldiers killed and

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officers, began to retreat to the west and southwest (Archive of the Moscow Region, fund 603 , op. 293261 s, d. 13, l. 37).

Having broken the resistance of the enemy at the Aleshkinsky-Akolzin line, parts of the corps proceeded to resolutely pursue the retreating enemy and, by the end of January 1, they connected with the advanced units of the troops of the Southwestern Front, after which they received an order to return back to the zone of their army (TsAMO. F. 303, inventory 4005, file 58, sheet 22).

Thus, during the Kotelnikovskaya and Tormosinskaya operations, the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps initially acted in the direction of the main attack of the troops of the 2nd Guards Army to the line of the Aksai River, and then received an independent task of participating in the defeat of the enemy's Tormosinskaya grouping in mutual action with the troops of the Southwestern Front. Going on the offensive on December 24, 1942, by January 1, 1943, the corps troops completed their task, advanced 180 kilometers, while freeing 28 settlements, including the large settlement Tormosin, which is an important road junction. During the offensive, units of the corps destroyed over 1,200 enemy soldiers and officers, captured about 100 people, knocked out and destroyed up to 30 tanks, 6 aircraft,

about 400 vehicles, 10 guns and mortars of various calibers. As trophies, 40 vehicles and tractors, 10 tanks, 37 guns and mortars of various calibers, 62 machine guns, two fuel depots, 3 ammunition depots, two food depots, one warehouse with engineering equipment and communications equipment (TsAMO F. 603, og 1998] s, file 19, sheet 6).

The fighting of the troops of the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps ended successfully. The final defeat of the Kotelnikovskaya and Tormosinskaya enemy groupings deprived the German command of the last hopes of releasing the troops encircled near Stalingrad.

True, later in his book, the former commander of the Stalingrad Front, Eremenko, wrote: "The 2nd Guards

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On December 26, the mechanized corps, which crossed the Aksai River, was given the task of advancing in the direction of Tormosino and capturing this point. Leaving by December 28 in the Verkh. Kurmoyarskaya, the troops of the corps, in cooperation with the 33rd Guards Rifle Division, began crossing the Don on the move. Having relatively easily overcome such a significant water barrier and destroyed parts of the enemy's cover on the right bank, the corps and division on December 29 reached the Zhirny-Aginov line. The next day, December 30, the advance continued successfully: the attackers reached the line of Minaev, Epifanov. From here, having provided itself from the west and northwest with the 33rd Guards Rifle Division, the 2nd Guards Mechanized [423] Corps advanced towards Tormosin, which was occupied in cooperation with units of the 5th Shock Army, advancing from east. It should be noted that as a result of the actions of the troops of the Southwestern Front, even before that, the small enemy forces in this sector decreased in connection with the transfer of part of the troops to Morozovsk and Tatsinskaya. The ease with which the crossing of the Don took place, and later the attack on Tormosin, showed that there really was no strike force here.

#### 6th MECHANIZED BODY

The 6th Mechanized Corps (commanded by Major General of the Tank Troops S. I. Bogdanov), which consisted of the 51st, 54th and 55th Mechanized Brigades, the 77th and 78th Tank Regiments, was reinforced by the 1250th and 1264th anti-tank and 88th guards mortar regiments and had 13.3 thousand personnel, 195 tanks (117 T-34 and 78 T-70 tanks), 108 armored vehicles, 205 guns and mortars . All personal

the composition had combat experience and was quite well prepared for combat operations (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, d. 93, l. 18).

By the evening of December 23, the corps was concentrated in the Zeta area. The next day, in order to take advantage of the favorable operational situation, the army commander decided to strike the 6th mechanized corps on the flank of the Kotelnikovskaya grouping against the nickname.

On December 25, the enemy, leaving strong rearguards of infantry and tanks of the 17th Panzer Division on the northern bank of the Aksai River, managed to withdraw his main forces south of this river, concentrating them on the defense of the settlements of Vodyansky, Zalivsky and Klykov. However, in the section from Generalovskaya to Dorofeevskaya, where units of the 2nd Romanian Infantry Division were defending, the defense was less reliable.

In this situation, the 6th mechanized corps was tasked with concentrating in the area 40 kilometers south of Zeta by 2000 hours on December 25 with the aim of delivering a strike in the direction of Zhutov-2, Gremyachiy with

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I would like to assist the 7th Panzer Corps in the offensive against Kotelnikovo (TsAMO. F. 220, op. 451, d. 43, l. 38-40).

In carrying out this task, the 62nd Tank Brigade of the 7th Tank Corps reached the Aksai River by 11 p.m. on December 25 and occupied the settlement of Novoaksaisky, but the attempt to force this river on the move was not successful. On the evening of December 26, the 6th mechanized corps reached the Aksai River and started a battle for Sharnutovsky and Darganov.

At first, his offensive developed slowly. The enemy put up stubborn resistance with artillery and rifle-machine-gun fire from strongpoints. Then the corps commander decided to speed up the offensive to bring into battle from the second echelon of the corps the 77th and 78th tank regiments. These units, with the support of the artillery attached to the corps, struck at the joint between the enemy's strongholds and, having broken their resistance, began to move forward. The success of the tank regiments was immediately taken advantage of by the mechanized brigades, which also rushed to the attack.

In the battles for the stronghold of Zhutovo-2, the 79th tank regiment, which acted jointly with the 54th mechanized brigade, especially distinguished itself. When the brigade's infantry units, approaching Zhutovo-2, came under flank fire and lay low, the commander of the 79th Tank Regiment, Major V.P. Ryazantsev, decided to attack the settlement from the rear. Having burst into it, the tankers destroyed

lived up to a battalion of enemy infantry, captured six guns and ensured the successful offensive of the remaining formations of the corps, which by the end of the day reached the line of Samokhin, Sharnutovsky. In total, on December 25, parts of the corps captured up to 200 enemy soldiers and officers, 50 guns, an ammunition depot and 5 trucks with cargo (TsAMO. F. 303, op. 4005, file 15, sheet 25).

On the night of December 26-27, the 6th mechanized corps was given the task of launching an offensive on December 27 and capturing the Karanchev, Pimen-Cherni, and Vylasny state farm by 2000 hours. The idea of the army commander was to carry out a deep penetration with two

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launches into the enemy defenses and to their exit in the Kotelnikovo area. With the fulfillment of this plan, they were cut off ways of retreat of enemy troops to the south and favorable conditions were created for their destruction in the Kotel area  
nikov.

At 11 o'clock on December 27, the 6th mechanized corps, having replenished its fuel supplies, launched an offensive in the indicated direction and by the end of that day captured Pimen Cherni. In the battle for this settlement, the forward detachment of the corps distinguished itself, which was able to break into Pimen-Cherni with part of its forces (up to a platoon of submachine gunners), sowing panic in the ranks of the enemy. Under their cover, the remaining subunits of the forward detachment broke into the settlement, and then the main forces of the corps.

When fighting began for the settlement of Kotelnikovo, the commander of the 2nd Guards Army ordered the commander of the 6th Mechanized Corps to assist the 7th Tank Corps as much as possible from Nagolny. Solving this problem, parts of the 6th mechanized corps went to the area of the Nagolny farm, thereby cutting off the escape routes of the Kotelnikov group. By the end of December 28, he captured Karaichev, and in the second half of December 29 he captured Nagolny and reached the southern outskirts of Kotelnikovo. However, his delay in the previous days allowed the enemy to withdraw his troops from Kotelnikov in time, avoiding another encirclement.

## OPERATION "LITTLE SATURN"

By mid-December, the troops of the South-Western Front (commander General Colonel N.F. Vatutin) were operating on the Middle Don - the 1st and 3rd Guards General Military, the 5th Tank Army, and the 6th Army of the Voronezh Front ( front commander lieutenant general F.I. Golikov). The front line in the section from Novaya Kalitva to Veshenskaya passed along the Don, then

turned sharply to the south and then walked along the rivers Krivaya and Chir. The actions of the Soviet troops unfolded in a 420-kilometer strip. They were supported by the 17th Air Army of General S.A. Krasovsky, and the 6th Army - the 2nd Air Army of General K.N. Smirnova. Both of them had 552 combat aircraft, including 119 U-2 and R-5 light night bombers (TsAMO. F. 203, op. 2843, d. 286, l. 66, 72: The defeat of the Italo-German troops on the Don (December 1942), Short operational-tactical essay. - M., 1945. - P. 27).

The German command sought to pin down the Soviet troops with a stubborn defense in order to first gain time to concentrate the strike force, then proceed to deblockade the troops encircled in Stalingrad. On the Middle Don from Novaya Kalitva to Nizhne Chirskaya, Soviet troops were opposed by the main forces of the 8th Italian Army, the German-Romanian operational group Hollidt, the remnants of the 3rd Romanian Army and the 48th German Tank Corps, which was part of the army group "Goth". The densest grouping, consisting of German troops, was created in front of the sector of the 5th Panzer Army along the line of the river. Chir. Italian

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Russian troops were against the troops of the right wing of the Southwestern Front and in front of the 6th Army of the Voronezh Front. The enemy grouping before the offensive of the Soviet troops increased significantly. The 385th Infantry and 27th German Panzer Divisions were additionally advanced to the area of Boguch ra. In total, the enemy had 27 divisions in this direction, of which four were tank divisions.

RELATION OF FORCES AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PARTIES BY THE  
BEGINNING OF THE OPERATION ON THE MIDDLE DON

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AND TI  
E SINGS E OI

Compiled according to: TsAMO, F. 229, op. 590, d. 16. l. 35; Op. 598, d. 155, l. 4-7, 14. The data have been corrected taking into account a number of publications.

It can be seen from the data in the table that the Soviet troops not only did not have the superiority necessary for the offensive, but were even inferior to the enemy in men and artillery. However, a more than twofold advantage in tanks gave them a chance of success, but only on condition of the correct choice of the direction of the main attack, the skillful massing of forces and means in the chosen directions, the rapid breaking of the enemy defenses and the immediate transfer of hostilities to its depth.

Defense along the river. The Don was occupied by the 8th Italian Army (commander General I. Gariboldi), along the Krivaya and Chir rivers - the Hollidt task force, in the lower reaches of the river. Chir - the remnants of the 3rd Romanian army and the 48th non-German tank corps. The enemy defense consisted of one or two lanes up to 20-25 km deep. The first, main, strip had a depth of 6-8 km and consisted of two

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positions, each of which included two or three trenches and a system of numerous bunkers, dugouts, which were in fire communication. The second strip, prepared only in one (Boguchar) direction, was located at a distance of 15-20 km from the forward edge. Its only position was equipped with one or two trenches and separate strongholds, located on the dominant heights and in settlements, and passed along the southern bank of the Bogucharka River.

On November 23, Supreme Commander-in-Chief I. Stalin authorized an additional operation by the forces of the South-Western and left wing of the Voronezh fronts in order to expand the front of the offensive and deliver an additional and extremely sensitive blow to the enemy in the general direction of Millerovo, Rostov-on-Don. It was assumed that the success of this operation could create conditions for the complete defeat of the enemy on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front and, at the same time, more reliably ensure the liquidation of the encircled group from the west and south-west. The operation was codenamed "Saturn".

The immediate goal of the operation was to defeat the 8th Italian Army and the Hollidt Task Force, for which two shock groups were created on the Southwestern Front: one on the right flank of the 1st Guards Army (commander Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov ) consisting of six rifle divisions and one tank corps to strike from the bridgehead south of Upper Mamon in a southerly direction to Millerovo; the second - on the front of the 3rd Guards Army (commander Lieutenant General D.D. Lelyushenko) east of Bokovskaya, consisting of five rifle divisions and one mechanized corps for a simultaneous attack from east to west on Millerovo, in order to create an encirclement ring around the grouping against the nickname. After the defeat of the Italian troops surrounded, develop an offensive against Rostov. To support the operation from the northwest and west, the 6th Army of the Voronezh Front, consisting of five rifle divisions and two tank

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corps should strike from the area southwest of Upper Mamon to Kantemirovka, Voloshino.

The preparation of the operation to defeat the enemy on the Middle Don began at the end of November 1942 under the general leadership of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, and the coordination of the actions of the two fronts was entrusted to its representative, Colonel-General of Artillery N. N. Voronov. The start of the operation was planned for December 10.

Insufficient capacity of the railways, lack of vehicles prevented the concentration of troops, equipment, and material reserves intended for its implementation by the appointed time. The 6th Army has three rifle divisions, a rifle brigade, the 17th Tank Corps, artillery units, and the Southwestern Front has five rifle divisions, the 18th, 24th, and 25th Tank Corps and the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, tank and artillery regiments began to arrive only on 12 December. Therefore, the start of the operation was postponed to December 16. The 2nd Guards Army (commanded by Lieutenant General R.Ya. Malinovsky), which was intended to participate in Operation Saturn, was directed by the decision of the Headquarters to reinforce the troops defending in the Kotelnikovsky direction. On the night of December 13-14, the Headquarters changed the direction of the main attack of the Southwestern Front and the left wing of the Voronezh Front from the south to Rostov to the southeast to Morozovsk, Tormosin in the rear of the enemy deblocking grouping.

Later, on December 13, 1942, in the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, it will be explained that the Saturn operation was conceived in a situation favorable for the Soviet troops. Subsequently, the situation changed, as the offensive of the 5th Tank and 3rd Guards Combined Arms Armies was slowed down, and the enemy managed to bring infantry and tank divisions, and therefore the attack on Rostov could not be successful. And of course, the offensive of the German troops in the Kotelnikovsky direction, which began on December 12. These are the reasons that made

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The rate is to change the direction of the main attack to Nizhny Astakhov, Morozovsky and reduce its depth. The operation became known as "Little Saturn". In the course of it, the troops of the Southwestern Front were to liquidate the Bokovo-Morozov grouping of the enemy and capture the Millerovo, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsk line; The troops of the 6th Army and the 17th Panzer Corps were to reach the Kantemirovka line and cover the main grouping from an enemy strike from the west.

The main blow was to be delivered by the 1st Guards Army from the sturgeon bridgehead in the direction of Tatsin-



Skye, Morozovsk, and part of the forces - to Verkhne-Chirsky; the second - from the Bokovsky area to Verkhne-Chirsky and Bolshanka, towards the main shock grouping of the front, the 3rd Guards Army struck.

The 5th Panzer Army, in cooperation with the 5th Shock Army (commanded by General M.M. Popov) of the Stalingrad Front, had the task of defeating the Nizhnechirsky enemy grouping, and then delivering strikes in the directions of Morozovsk and Tormosin. Thus, she had to ensure the actions of the strike groups of the front from the southeast (TsAMO, F. 229, op. 590, d. 2, l. 100-101).

The 6th Army (commanded by Lieutenant General F. M. Kharitonov) of the Voronezh Front, advancing from the area southwest of Upper Mamon in the general direction of Kantemirovka, was to capture the Novaya Kalitva, Nikolskaya line on the fourth day of the operation, which was to reliably ensure actions of the main strike force of the Southwestern Front from an attack from the west. To solve the assigned tasks, she was allocated up to 50% of all the forces of the Voronezh Front, including all tank troops.

The immediate task of the South-Western Front, which was given three to four days to solve, was to break through the enemy defenses, encircle the main forces of his grouping on the Middle Don and move mobile formations to the rear of the troops of the left wing of Army Group Don. The main role in achieving the success of the operation was assigned to tank and mechanized corps.

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himself, which were attached to the combined arms armies. They were used in the directions of the main attacks of these armies. According to the plan of the commanders of the fronts, on the very first day of the operation, it was planned to bring three tank corps into battle, and on the second - one more tank and one mechanized corps. Mobile formations were supposed to take possession of the areas indicated by them on the second or fourth day of the operation. It was assumed that by the end of the sixth day of the offensive, rifle formations would reach the line of Novo-Markovka, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsk.

The operational formation of the armies, with the exception of the 5th Panzer, was in two echelons. Each of them, acting in the main direction, had a mobile group. In the 1st Guards Army, these were three tank corps (18th, 24th, and 25th), in the 6th Army, the 17th Tank Corps, and in the 3rd Guards Army, the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps. In the second echelon, one rifle division was allocated. In addition, artillery and anti-aircraft artillery groups, groups of guards mortar units, reserves for various purposes and an aviation group were created in each army.

One of the most important features of the preparations for the Little Saturn operation was that the Soviet command skilfully and resolutely massed its main forces and assets in the directions of the main strikes. Thus, the commander of the 6th Army, having stretched out only one rifle division on an 18-kilometer front, concentrated four rifle divisions, [7th tank corps, a tank brigade, two tank and eight artillery regiments. This made it possible to have | km of the breakthrough section, rather high densities: the width of the divisions' lanes is 2.25 km; tanks for direct infantry support - 12, guns and mortars - 62. Taking into account the fact that the tank corps was to be introduced at the completion of the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone, the density of tanks reached 31.6 per 1 km (Great victory on the Volga. - M.: Military Publishing, 1965. - S. 323).

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On the 18-kilometer sector of the breakthrough of the 1st Guards Army there were five rifle divisions and three tank corps, while on the remaining 127-kilometer front only two rifle divisions remained. The densities in the breakthrough area were a division per 3.5 km, 6 direct support tanks, and 33 per | km, guns and mortars up to 75.

In the 3rd Guards Army, a rifle division reached a density of 3 km, up to 70 guns and mortars, 7-8 NPP tanks, and, taking into account the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, 18 per kilometer of the breakthrough area.

Thanks to the concentration of forces and means in the main directions, it was possible to create powerful strike groups, which made it possible to achieve a double, and in some areas even a triple superiority over against Nika.

DENSITY AND CORRELATION OF FORCES AND EQUIPMENT  
IN THE SITES OF BREAKTHROUGH ARMIES

Soviet And  
Troops And  
Accordingly Forces And Means Of One

On the 9-kilometer breakthrough section of the 6th Army

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562 62 | Guns and mortars 171 19 3.3:1

(caliber 75 mm and larger)

On the 16-kilometer section of the breakthrough of the 1st Guards Army

Ga Ga yy Ga [8 Guns  
and mortars 2.2:1 (caliber 75 mm  
and grup

On the 13-kilometer breakthrough section of the 3rd Guards Army

[8 [27 [wayyuyy [9 [08] m.

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Forces and means

Guns and mortars (caliber  
75 mm and grup

The preparation of troops for the upcoming offensive was completed by 15 December. The tank corps, having crossed the Don on the night before the offensive, formed up in their starting areas, which were located 7-10 km from the front line.

Much attention was paid to exploration. It was especially active during the days preceding the offensive. From 1] to 15 December reconnaissance in force was carried out in all armies, involving in each division from a reinforced rifle company to three battalions. The subdivisions basically completed the tasks assigned to them. True, with the transition of the troops to the offensive, it turned out that in some areas the enemy's fire system, as well as the depth of his minefields, were not fully revealed, and the defense in a number of areas turned out to be much deeper than expected. It was not possible to completely open the opposing grouping either. In particular, reconnaissance did not timely establish the arrival of the 6th Army of the 385th non-German infantry division in the zone. All this, of course, made it difficult to break through the enemy defenses.

The offensive of the troops of the Southwestern Front and the 6th army

missions of the Voronezh Front began in the early morning of December 16th. At 8 o'clock in the morning, powerful artillery fire fell upon the enemy. An hour and a half artillery preparation was carried out in dense fog, firing was carried out on the squares. The planes could not take off until the middle of the day. It was simply impossible to completely suppress the enemy's fire system under such conditions, which then affected the course of the offensive. At 9 o'clock

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30 minutes later, formations of the 1st Guards and 6th Armies went on the offensive. Rifle divisions crossed the Don across the ice and established crossings and, together with formations operating from the sturgeon bridgehead, broke into the front line of the enemy on a wide front. At the same time, the troops advancing from behind the Don had to overcome the sloping and high right bank of the river through deep snowdrifts. In addition, the attacking troops had to meet with rather powerful fire resistance from the enemy.

After a three-hour battle, rifle formations of the 6th Army wedged into the defense for 2-3 km. However, the commander of the army could not build on the emerging success, since the 17th tank corps (commanded by General P.P. Polu Boyarov) was on the sturgeon bridgehead, ready to enter the gap in the band of the 1st Guards Army. Meanwhile, the situation in the sector of the breakthrough of this army was developing unfavorably. The fact is that the 41st (commander Major General N.P. Ivanov) and 44th (commander Major General V.A. During the day, they managed to wedge into its defenses by only 300-400 m, and even then only in separate sectors. During this time, on the flanks of the army's shock group, the advance amounted to 1.5-2 km.

Taking into account the protracted process of breaking through the first position of the enemy's defense, the commander of the front troops ordered the introduction of tank corps into the battle to speed up the breakthrough of the defense. But the entry into battle of mobile formations was not ensured due to poorly organized engineering support. As soon as they came into contact with the enemy, the tank corps immediately got into minefields, through which the sappers did not have time to make passes in advance, and therefore suffered significant losses. The 25th Panzer Corps alone lost 27 tanks (TsAMO. F. 229, op. 590, d. 14, l. 8; Op. 604, d. 3, l. 8). The tankers had to start making passes in the minefields of the enemy

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on their own. The situation was complicated by enemy aircraft, which unleashed air strikes on accumulations of Soviet tanks. By evening, the infantry troops, having captured the first position of the enemy, started fighting for his second position. During the night, passages were made in the minefields of the enemy, and at dawn on December 17, the tank troops rushed forward.

In the center of the offensive zone of the Southwestern Front, the 3rd Guards Army also made an attempt to break through the enemy defenses, however, it was not possible to break the resistance of the German 62nd and 294th Infantry Divisions in the direction of the main attack of this army and there was no breakthrough.

In an effort to complete the breakthrough as soon as possible, the Soviet troops did not stop fighting even at night. At the same time, intra-army regroupings were carried out, measures were taken to bring up artillery.

On the morning of December 17, the 6th and 1st Guards armies, after a short air and artillery preparation, resumed the offensive. During the second day of the offensive, the rifle divisions made extensive use of maneuver to bypass and envelop enemy strongholds, capturing them in close cooperation with tanks and artillery.

The first to complete the breakthrough of the main line of defense were the 25th Tank Corps (commander General P.P. Pavlov) and the 4th Guards Rifle Corps (commander General N.A. Hagen). The 17th and 18th (commander General B.S. Bakharov) tank corps rushed into the gap that had formed, expanding the breakthrough towards the flanks. The enemy was forced to begin a retreat to the army line, prepared along the river. Bogucharka. By evening, the tank corps and divisions of the 4th Guards Rifle Corps advanced 20-25 km, completed the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone and tried to break through the army line on the move. However, the enemy, having brought up reserves in advance, managed to repel their attempt to break through the prepared defenses on the move.

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The advancing troops were faced with the task of preventing the enemy from retreating in an organized manner, bringing up reserves and gaining a foothold on the rear defensive line. Therefore, the front commanders demanded more decisive action, to accelerate the advance. Fulfilling these requirements, the commanders of the 6th and 1st Guards armies decide to continue the offensive at night in order to complete the breakthrough of the operational defense to its entire depth in the shortest possible time.

On the night of December 18, the 25th Panzer Corps, in mutual

action with the 41st Guards Rifle Division managed to break the resistance of the enemy troops on the river. Bogucharka crossed it and advanced almost 10 km to the south. The breakthrough of the corps created a threat to the rear of the entire Italo-German group defending here. To close the gap, the commander of the 8th Italian Army nominated the 3rd Italian Mountain Rifle Division "Julia", the 27th German Panzer Division and part of the forces of the 387th German Infantry Division from the Alpine Corps. On the morning of December 18, Soviet troops began stubborn battles with this group. During the day they repulsed several strong counterattacks. It should be noted the role of rocket artillery in repulsing these counterattacks. Katyusha volleys inflicted damage on the enemy troops, disrupted their control, and introduced disorganization into the actions of the troops. And just the purely psychological impact of rockets on defending or counterattacking troops. The enemy, who suffered heavy losses, could not withstand the blow of the Soviet troops. Attacked by rifle formations from the front, and by tank corps from the flanks and rear, he left the army line of defense and began to retreat to the south-southwest. As a result, his defenses in the Boguchar direction were broken through.

The tank corps immediately began pursuit. Smashing the rear and the retreating columns of the Italian troops, they rapidly moved forward. Behind them, consolidating the success achieved, rifle formations advanced. By the end of the day, Soviet tanks went to the rear

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35th Army Italian Corps, cutting off his retreat to the south. Having discovered this, many of its units left their positions and, abandoning their equipment and weapons, turned into a stampede. The picture of the retreat of the enemy is picturesquely shown in the book of the Italian author D. Tolloi "With the Italian army in Russia." He wrote: "On December 16, Soviet troops overthrew the front of the Italian army... Many headquarters began to move out, losing all contact with the troops. Units attacked by tanks tried to flee in all directions... Artillery and motor vehicles were abandoned. Many officers tore off their insignia, the soldiers threw machine guns, rifles, equipment "(Stalingrad. Event. Impact. Symbol. - M.: Progress - Academy, 1995. - P. 64).

In the center of the offensive zone of the Southwestern Front, on December 17, after a 30-minute artillery preparation, the 3rd Guards Army made a new attempt to break through the defenses, but again failed to break the resistance of the 62nd and 294th non-German infantry divisions in the direction of the main attack of this army. The penetration of Soviet troops into the enemy's defense was insignificant. In order to reverse the unfavorable course of events and accelerate the

ditch, the army commander brought into battle the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps (commander General I.N. Russiyanov). Together with the formations of the 14th Rifle Corps (commander General F.E. Sheverdin), he, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, began to slowly move in the direction of Bokovskaya.

On the morning of December 18, tankers broke into this village - the last major center of resistance in the main line of defense. Stubborn battles ensued. The enemy fought for every street, for every house, regardless of losses, but by the end of the day he had to leave his positions. However, the Soviet troops also suffered heavy losses. The th Guards Mechanized Corps alone lost 32 tanks, i.e. 20% of its composition. In the tank regiments that directly supported the infantry, a total of 52 out of 89 tanks failed (TsAMO. F. 232,

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op. 590, d. 15, l. 31). There were considerable losses in personnel, especially in rifle divisions.

On the left flank of the Southwestern Front, the 5th Panzer Army was advancing. On December 16-18, with the forces of the 5th mechanized corps and the 321st rifle division, she crossed the river. Chir, northeast of Oblivskaya and on its right bank, captured a bridgehead 15 km long along the front and almost 5 km deep.

Thus, in the course of three days of fierce fighting, the troops of the Southwestern and Voronezh fronts broke through the enemy defenses in three sectors. At the same time, in the direction of the main attack, they advanced to a depth of up to 40 km, expanding the breakthrough along the front to 60 km. Thanks to this, conditions were created for the rapid development of the offensive and the encirclement of the main forces of the 8th Italian army and the Hollidt task force. During fierce battles, the 3rd and 9th Italian, 294th and 298th German infantry divisions were defeated, significant losses were inflicted on the 52nd Italian infantry division.

After breaking through the enemy defenses, the troops of the Southwestern Front faced the task of cutting off the paths from the 8th Italian Army, encircling and destroying its main forces. The situation demanded a high-speed pursuit of the enemy, as the German command began a hasty transfer of reserves from the deep rear and neighboring armies. The appearance of new formations confirmed the enemy's desire to stop the further advance of the Soviet troops and hold their positions, primarily in order to ensure freedom of action for the Don Army Group to release the 6th and 4th tank armies surrounded in Stalingrad.

Taking into account the current situation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command took measures to unite the leadership of all the troops advancing on the Middle Don. By her order on December 19, the 6th Army was included in the Southwestern Front. The next day, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief agreed with the proposal of the Military Council

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this front to expand the zone of its offensive from the river. Kalitva to the line Novo-Markovka, Millerovo. The armies needed to speed up the offensive and complete the assigned tasks in the shortest possible time.

The commanders of formations were ordered not to get involved in protracted battles, but, bypassing the enemy, to rapidly develop the offensive in depth. The leading role in this was assigned to mobile troops. They were supposed to strike at the flank and rear of the Don Army Group and disrupt its counterattack in the Kotelnikovskiy direction. To this end, the 25th Tank and 1st Guards Mechanized Corps were given the task of capturing the Morozovsk area by December 22, the 24th Tank Corps by December 23 - Tatsinskaya, and the 17th and 18th Tank Corps by the 24th of December. - Millerovo (TsAMO, op. 590, d. 5, l. 107, 109, 111, 113; d. 26, l. 17).

December 19, Saturday

From the Soviet Information Bureau

Evening message

"In the region of the Middle Don, our troops attacked and occupied the cities of Novaya Kalitva, Kantemirovka, Boguchar and the regional centers of Tala, Radchenskoye, Bokovskaya."

The measures taken have led to decisive results. Already on December 19, the enemy front on the Middle Don collapsed, and the Soviet troops began to pursue him. In order to delay their offensive, the German command began to hastily create in the area of Millerovo, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsk a large grouping of eight divisions, of which half were armored. We had to get ahead of the enemy. Tank and mechanized corps continued their rapid advance, surrounding the enemy grouping. The forward detachments sent out from the tank corps, without getting involved in battles with individual enemy units and cutting off their escape routes, struck from the rear, seized communication centers, destroyed communication lines, and disorganized command and control. Following them, the main forces advanced, completing the encirclement and defeat of the continuing forces.



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group resistance. The enemy was completely demoralized.

Formations of the 6th Army, having broken the resistance of the enemy in the area of Pisarevka and Tala, advanced on Kantemirovka. On December 19, the 17th Panzer Corps, having carried out a swift detour maneuver, after a stubborn battle, captured it and cut the Voronezh-Rostov-on-Don railway, which was important for the Germans. At this time, the right-flank formations of the strike force of the 6th

the army had to repulse strong counterattacks of the approaching reserves, as well as those retreating here from the turn of the river. Bogucharka connections. With the introduction of the 160th Infantry Division from the second echelon of the army (commander Colonel MP Seryugin), the situation here stabilized. Continuing the offensive, on December 20, units of the 6th Army were the first to enter the territory of Ukraine.

Other armies also successfully developed the offensive. The 24th and 25th Panzer Corps carried out a wide coverage from the west of the entire enemy grouping operating against the troops of the Southwestern Front. At the same time, the 18th Tank Corps, the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, the 6th Guards Corps, and the 14th Rifle Corps achieved serious successes on the internal front of the planned encirclement. Their coordinated actions, despite the high activity of German aviation, led to the dissection of the enemy troops. Deep wedges were driven into his defense. The separation from the rifle troops of the tank corps advancing on Millerovo, Gatsinskaya and Morozovsk reached 100-120 km. |

Particularly active was the 24th Tank Corps (commander Lieutenant General V.M. Badanov). For seven days of the raid, the corps advanced to a depth of about 240 km and at dawn on December 24 went to Tatsinskaya. At 07:30, following a volley of guards mortars, the brigades of the corps attacked the enemy from three sides, who did not expect the appearance of Soviet tanks in their deep rear. At 0900, the 130th Tank Brigade (commander Lieutenant Colonel S.K. Nesterov), bypassing the village of Tatsinskaya from the east, reached the airfield, which was

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south of the village. Part of the forces that attacked the railway station captured it along with military echelons, among which was a train with 50 new  
our planes.

When the tank battalions of captains M.E. Nechaev and I.I. Linnik appeared at the airfield, an unimaginable panic began among the Germans. The pilots, dressed only in their underwear, rushed to their planes. Destroying oh-

wound, Soviet tanks broke into the airfield. Later, the then surviving German pilot K. Streit described those events in the following way in the article "About those who escaped from the underworld, or the Bloodbath in Tatsinskaya" (Ole dedeshchbsve eo! 9a- {ep71elpr. 1952. Oe? 7.) According to him, Thousands of people, badly captured by the rage, rushed about in a panic at the airfield, enveloped in fire. The planes that managed to take off collided with each other, exploded and fell to the ground like flaming torches. Other planes crashed into tanks during takeoff and also exploded with a terrible roar, throwing everything around. And Soviet tanks rammed planes that were on the ground. The roar of tanks and aircraft engines mingled with the roar of gun salvos and the crackle of machine-gun bursts into one monstrous cacophony, which called for a stunning picture of a rout that was rare in terms of ruthlessness.

In the meantime, the corps commander brought his reserve into battle - the 54th tank brigade of Colonel V.M. Poliakova. She attacked Tatsinskaya from the west and soon captured the second German airfield. However, the fleeting battles at the airfields were only a prologue to the hostilities of the 24th Panzer Corps. The enemy, who had settled in the village of Tatsinskaya, put up stubborn resistance, which they managed to break only in the evening. German troops lost here more than 3,500 soldiers and officers, 15 tanks, 73 vehicles, over 300 aircraft, 50 guns, and many other weapons and military equipment. As trophies, parts of the corps seized 8 warehouses with ammunition, food and other military equipment, 300 tons of gasoline (Stalingrad epic. - M.: Nauka, 1968. - P. 633-639).

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The withdrawal of Soviet troops to the Tatsinskaya area was of great operational importance, because with its loss the enemy lost the largest rear base, not to mention the airfields that fed the group encircled near Stalingrad. The loss of the Likhaya-Oblivskaya railway communication, through which all the supplies of the Don Army Group passed, as well as the threat looming over its rear, forced the German command to urgently use the divisions concentrated in the Tormosin area against the troops of the Southwestern Front. Already in the second half of December 24, units of the 24th Panzer Corps had to repel attacks by advanced enemy units that had approached from Tormosin.

The 25th Panzer Corps, pursuing the retreating enemy units, broke into Kashara on December 19. Retreating troops flocked here along all roads. Therefore, the fighting in this area immediately took on a stubborn character. The enemy, trying with all his might to break his way to the west, persistently attacked parts of the corps. But despite the strong support of aviation, he did not succeed in breaking through to Millerovo. Discarded in the northeast

in the exact direction, he came under attack from other Soviet formations and was finally defeated by them. On the night of December 21, having pulled up the rear, the 25th Panzer Corps resumed the offensive. On December 23-24, tanks had to fight heavy battles in the Uryupin area with units of the 306th Infantry and 8th German airfield divisions, which had advanced from the Tormosin area. Although by the end of December 24, the tankers captured Uryupin, they could not break through to Morozovsk.

The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps operated successfully. After breaking through the defense, he struck in a northwestern direction, in the rear of the 1st army corps of the Romanians. On December 19, his advanced 1st Guards Mechanized Brigade (commander Colonel F.V. Chervyakov) connected with the 197th Rifle Division (commander Major General M.I. Zaporozhchenko), closing the encirclement around the Romanian troops. The commander of the Romanian corps, leaving his subordinates

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troops to the mercy of fate, fled with their headquarters. Although with heavy losses, this grouping still managed to break through in a southwestern direction. However, she didn't get far. By the end of the next day, in the area of the village of Karginskaya, this grouping, which included units of the 7th and 11th Romanian, as well as the 62nd and 294th German infantry divisions, corps units of the 1st army corps of the Romanians, was completely defeated 3th Guards Army. The enemy lost more than 2.5 thousand people here alone in the dead, about 7.5 thousand were captured.

December 22, Tuesday

From the Soviet Information Bureau

morning message

In the region of the middle reaches of the Don, our troops continued their successful offensive. The guards of the unit, where the commander of Comrade. Russiyanov, drove the enemy out of a large settlement. In the battles for this settlement, up to 400 Nazis were destroyed and 98 captured. Trophies were captured: more than 100 vehicles, 2 tanks, 30 guns, 48 machine guns, 100 horses, an ammunition depot and a food depot.

Our troops continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied several dozen settlements, including the large settlements of Koleshatoye, Nikolskoye, Morozovka, Verkhne-Grachevsky, Popovka, Kamensky, Grekov, Fedorovka.

The main forces of the 3rd Guards Army pursued

German-Romanian troops in a southwestern direction. The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps was especially active. During the two days of the offensive, he fought for about 100 km, sweeping away the enemy columns that tried to flee on their way. On December 23, his units captured the village of Milyutinskaya on the move.

On December 19, the 18th Panzer Corps captured Meshkovo, reaching the rear of the right-flank formations of the 8th Italian Army. By that time, its separation from the main forces of the 1st Guards Army was approximately 35-40 km. But in this area, parts of the corps had to take a circular

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defense and two days to repel the violent onslaught of Italian German troops, who retreated from the Don and tried to break through to the southwest. With the approach of rifle divisions, the corps handed over its area to them and was able to resume the offensive.

The commander of the front demanded that the 1st and 3rd Guards armies complete the encirclement and destruction of the 8th Italian army, which, in two groupings, sought to slip out of the already clearly marked

running boiler.

December 22, Tuesday

From the Soviet Information Bureau

Evening message

In the region of the middle Don, our troops continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied several dozen settlements, including the large settlements of Koleschatoye, Nikolskoye, Morozovka, Verkhne-Grachevsky, Popovka, Kamensky, Grekov, Fedorovka.

The northern enemy grouping of 30 thousand people was intercepted on December 22 by the forward detachments of the 1st Guards Army, and then in the Arbuzovka area was blocked by the approaching units of the 6th Guards Rifle Corps (commander General I.P. Alferov). For two days, the Italian-German troops tried to break out of the encirclement. Only on the night of December 24, part of the grouping of about 14 thousand people managed to escape across the Kalitva River. But there she immediately came under attack from the formations of the 4th Guards Rifle Corps and ended up in two new boilers - in the Chertkov area up to 8 thousand people, and the rest in Gartmashevka (TsAMO. F. 229, op. 590, d. 148, sheets 187-190).

The Soviet command brought rocket artillery to the Arbuzovka area. First, the grouping of

a powerful fire strike collapsed, then it was cut into pieces by counter strikes and liquidated by the end of the day. The enemy left up to 7 thousand corpses on the battlefield, 9 thousand people were taken prisoner. As trophies, Soviet troops captured a lot of weapons and military equipment.

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The enemy's southern grouping began to withdraw with some delay, since it received permission for it only on the night of December 20th. Two days later, in the area of Alekseevo-Lozovskaya, which is 810 km south of Arbuzovka, it was surrounded by the 6th Guards Rifle Corps. After exhausting two days of fighting, the remnants of it escaped from the encirclement in a southeasterly direction. Further retreat soon turned into a disorderly flight. Scattered and mixed parts of the German, Romanian and Italian divisions rushed in an uncontrollable avalanche across the snowy Don steppes to the west. Roads clogged with abandoned military equipment and convoys, panic and looting accompanied this disorderly retreat. Under the blows of the Soviet troops, this poorly organized mass of people gradually dispersed, thinned out, and finally ceased to exist. Most of it ended up in Soviet captivity. Soldiers who surrendered were often left even without appropriate protection. Sometimes they scattered and the masses perished in the endless snow-covered steppe. There were cases when the columns of the retreating enemy troops freed the prisoners, but in the next clashes they again scattered or again surrendered. Only a few units managed to join forces with the main forces in the Skosyrskaya area.

By December 24, the rifle formations of the Southwestern Front had completed the defeat of the retreating enemy, and the mobile army groups, breaking away from the main forces and advancing to a depth of 150-240 km, reached the area of Millerovo, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsk. They were located 140 km from Rostov, the path to which, in essence, turned out to be open. For almost 340 km, Soviet troops crushed the enemy defenses on the Don and Chir rivers.

On the Middle Don, 12 enemy divisions were defeated. Favorable conditions were created for covering the entire right flank of the grouping of German-Hungarian troops operating in the Voronezh direction, and at the same time

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a deep exit to the rear of the shock group of Army Group Don, which was advancing on Stalingrad.

To stop the advance of the Soviet troops on

Middle Don and to eliminate the threat looming over the Don army group, the German command was forced to send to the Millerovo, Tatsinskaya, Morozovsk region all formations from the Tormosinskaya group, as well as those divisions that arrived from other sectors of the front. In total from 18 to 25 December, i.e. in a week, it concentrated eight divisions in the indicated area, three of them tank divisions, as well as departments of the 30th army, 24th and 48th tank corps. On the basis of the 30th Army Corps (commander General Fretter Pico), on December 23, the Fretter Pico Task Force was created. It included the newly formed 304th Infantry Division, the Crazing Group (its core consisted of parts of the 3rd Mountain Division), the remnants of the 29th Corps and the remnants of the 298th Infantry Division. In general, the enemy had an additional eight divisions.

December 24, Thursday

From the Soviet Information Bureau

Evening message

In the area of the Middle Don, our troops continued to successfully develop the offensive and occupied several dozen settlements, including the large settlements of Mikhailovo-Aleksandrovsky, Kolodezi, Mankovo-Berezovo, Selivanovka, the regional centers of Skosyrskaya and Milyutinskaya and the large railway stations of Chaikin, Sheptukhovka.

Thus, in a fairly short time, instead of the front that collapsed on the Middle Don, the command of the Wehrmacht succeeded on the outskirts of the river. Seversky Donets create a new defense front. From December 24, intense battles began in the entire offensive zone of the Southwestern Front with fresh enemy forces that had just arrived. They were especially fierce in nature on the right wing of the front in the Novaya Kalitva and

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Chertkovo and in the center - near Millerovo, Tatsinskaya and north of Morozovsk.

Based on the situation and the newly arisen tasks, the commander of the troops of the South-Western Front decided with the forces of the 6th and 1st Guards Armies to complete the exit to the previously assigned lines and destroy the enemy blockaded in the areas of Gartmashevka and Chertkovo, and then capture Millerovo. The 3rd Guards Army was given the task of linking up with the 24th Tank Corps in Tatsinskaya, having previously liberated the Skosyrskaya area. Subsequently, in cooperation with the 5th Panzer Army, she was supposed to defeat the enemy in the Morozovsk area.

and Tormosin. The 5th shock army, transferred on December 26 to the Southwestern Front, was to destroy the Nizhnechirsky enemy grouping. General V.D. was appointed commander of this army. Tsvetaev, and the former army commander, General M.M. Popov became deputy commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front.

December 26, Saturday

From the Soviet Information Bureau

Evening message

During December 26, our troops in the Middle Do region continued to successfully develop the offensive, occupied several dozen settlements, including the city and the large railway station Tatsinskaya, the regional center and the large railway station Verkhne-Tarasovka, the regional centers of Krivorozhye, Kashara, Efremovo-Stepanovka and large settlements Kaskovka, Nikolskaya, Sharpaevka, Ilyinka, Kostino-Bystryansky, Gruzinov.

The command of the Wehrmacht, realizing the danger of the advance of the Soviet troops in the southeast direction, decided to concentrate its main efforts primarily on the defeat of their mobile formations. The first blow was delivered to the 24th Panzer Corps by the forces of the 11th Panzer Division and the Philipp battle group, which included several infantry units. After capturing Tatsinskaya, the 24th Panzer Corps went over to the defense

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not, having the order of the commander of the front troops to hold it until the approach of rifle formations. By that time, out of 159 tanks available in the corps at the beginning of the operation, only 58 remained in service. The motorized rifle battalions of tank brigades were also significantly thinned out. The fuel was running out (0.2 refueling), and there were only 0.5 ammunition left.

On the morning of December 26, the enemy went on the offensive simultaneously from three sides and soon surrounded the corps. The Germans had 130 tanks and overwhelming infantry superiority. Stubborn battles ensued. In such difficult conditions, the tankers showed courage, fortitude and the will to win. All attacks of the enemy, who tried to destroy the corps, which seemed to be in a hopeless situation, were repulsed. The hull was supplied by air. However, the limited capabilities of transport aviation could not satisfy all his needs. Attempts by other mobile formations to help the encircled tankers were unsuccessful.

The Germans continued to press furiously. The next day, their tanks broke into the village of Tatsinskaya from the fuse. The corps commander threw his last reserve into battle - the remnants of the tank battalion of Captain M.E. Not tea. Five Soviet tanks fearlessly counterattacked the outnumbered enemy. In an unequal battle, seven enemy tanks were destroyed, and three of them were knocked out by the battalion commander himself. At the cost of their lives, the valiant tankers delayed the enemy until reinforcements arrived. For courage and heroism shown during the raid, and especially in the battles near Tatsinskaya, Captain M.E. Nechaev was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

On the night of December 28, the 24th Panzer Corps received permission from the commander of the front to break through. A sudden attack by Major A. Bibikov's head tank battalion with a landing of machine gunners under the command of Major K. Budrin broke the enemy ring, and by 11 o'clock the corps left the encirclement with minimal losses - 4 tanks, 13 killed, 22 wounded.

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The command highly appreciated the feats of arms of the corps. It was reorganized into the 2nd Guards Tank Corps and awarded the honorary title "Tatsinsky". Corps commander V.M. Badanov received the rank of lieutenant general of tank troops and was the first in the country to be awarded the Order of Suvorov, 3rd degree. All soldiers and officers who distinguished themselves in battles received military awards; lieutenant colonel S.K. Nesterov, Major A.S. Bibikov and posthumously the commander of a tank company, Senior Lieutenant A.V. Timchenko - Order of Lenin, chief of staff of the corps, Colonel A.S. Burdeyny, Major K.G. Budrin and others - the Order of the Red Banner.

At the final stage of Operation Little Saturn (December 24-31), counterattacks and counterattacks by approaching enemy reserves were repulsed, and they consolidated on the lines they had reached. On the directions of the main attacks of the troops of the Southwestern Front, the German command managed to concentrate large forces and create an almost double superiority in tanks and aircraft. Therefore, all attempts by the mobile formations that had escaped far ahead to seize Morozovsky and Millerovo were not crowned with success. The main reason for this was, first of all, the weakening of the strike power of tank and mechanized corps due to significant losses in materiel and a large separation from their supply bases. A negative role was also played by the fact that in the actions of the front's mobile formations, not united by a common command, proper coordination in place and time was not achieved. In addition, they were not supported in a timely manner by rifle formations, which were far behind the army mobile groups. Aviation, due to the great remoteness of airfields, is not



was able to provide them with effective support.

The main forces of the 3rd Guards Army, having reached the Skosyrskaya line north of Morozovsk by December 29, together with mobile formations, made another attempt to capture them. But this time, too, no success was achieved (TsAMO. F. 232, op. 590, d. 5, l. 134-138). Only on December 31, after long and fierce 660-

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The 5th Panzer Army finally succeeded in capturing Oblivskaya.

The fighting on the right wing of the Southwestern Front also took on a fierce character. Here the main blow of the enemy fell on the formations of the 1st Guards Army, which by December 25 had reached the line of Novo Markovka, Millerovo. With the forces of the Fretter-Pico task force, reinforced by the 7th Panzer Division that had just arrived from France, the enemy tried to push back the 17th and 18th Panzer Corps with a counterattack, along with the approaching formations of the 6th Guards Rifle Corps. But all his attacks were repelled. The second counterattack was delivered by the German 19th Panzer Division from the Belovodsk area in the direction of Chertkovo with the aim of deblocking the encircled grouping there. Here the blow was repelled by units of the 4th Guards Rifle Corps. Although the enemy managed to push him 40-50 km to the east, he did not achieve his main goal, on the approaches to Chertkovo and Kudinovka he was stopped.

Operation "Small Saturn", which was the development of the counteroffensive of the Soviet troops near Stalingrad, ended on December 31. In 16 days, the Soviet troops advanced 150-200 km, liberated the territory with 1264 settlements with a total area of 31 thousand square meters. km. As a result, the main forces of the 8th Italian Army, the Hollidt Task Force and the remnants of the 3rd Romanian Army were completely defeated. The enemy lost 120 thousand soldiers and officers (including 60.5 thousand people captured: 48 thousand Italians, over 7 thousand Romanians and about 5 thousand Germans (TsAMO. F. 229, op. 612, d. 163, l. 49-66), up to 350 tanks, more than 700 aircraft, about 2200 guns and mortars, 8.5 thousand vehicles, a large number of other military equipment, weapons and property (TsAMO. F. 232, op. 590, d. 14, sheet 13; file 152, sheet 37-54; F. 229, list 604, file 3, sheet 25; F. 37C, list 142 207, file 1, sheet 25—26, etc.) The Italian troops suffered the greatest defeat. Of the 125,000 men who numbered in the two corps of the 8th Italian Army, namely, they were in the direction of the main attack

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Western Front, no more than 40 thousand were saved (Filatov G. Mussolini's Eastern Campaign. M., 1968. - P. 135).

The defeat of the Italian troops on the Don caused literally a shock in Rome. The Duce sent a delegation to Hitler's headquarters, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count G. Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law) and the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal U. Cavaliero. The Italians tried to persuade Hitler to make peace with the Soviet Union, and to concentrate the main efforts on the Mediterranean. However, the Fuhrer decisively rejected all these proposals, sarcastically promising his allies to return the remnants of their army to their homeland after they were replaced by three German divisions from France. In a word, tense negotiations did not lead to anything. But after that, relations between the allies deteriorated sharply. Berlin ceased to regard Italy as a reliable ally. The crushing defeat, first of the Romanians and then of the Italians on the Eastern Front, was a serious blow to the fascist bloc.

The losses of the Soviet troops in the operation "Small Saturn" amounted to 95.7 thousand people (of which 20.3 thousand people were killed). The armies suffered the following losses: 1st Guards - 40.5 thousand people (including 7.9 thousand killed by us), 3rd Guards - 21.6 thousand (including 4.5 thousand killed), 6th - 21.3 thousand (including 4.1 thousand killed), 5th tank - 11.4 thousand people (including 3 thousand killed). The rest of the losses fall on the air armies and front-line units 940 tanks, 120 aircraft, more than 600 guns and mortars (TsAMO. F. 229, op. 592, d. 87, l. 185-186, 188, 192, 208, 213, 219, 225, 233, 270; file 38, sheets 21-22).

The successful offensive of the Southwestern and Voronezh fronts completely deprived the German command of the opportunity to provide assistance to the group encircled near Stalingrad and created favorable conditions for the Red Army to launch a general strategic offensive in the Voroshilovgrad and Voronezh directions.

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#### THE ART OF OPERATIONS ON THE OUTER FRONT OF ENVIRONMENT

The environment, as one of the methods of armed struggle, has been known to mankind for a long time. It was first used during the 2nd Punic War near Cannes in 216 BC by the Carthaginian commander Hannibal. Then, using the cavalry, he managed to cover both flanks of the Roman army, which lost 48,000 killed and about 10,000 captured in 12 hours of battle. The losses of the Carthaginian army amounted to less than 6 thousand people. Since then, Cannes has become synonymous with

moment of encirclement and defeat of a large group of protivnik.

In Soviet military history, the encirclement operation was first carried out in 1939 under the leadership of G.K. Zhukov on the Khalkhin Gol River. During this operation, the decisive role was played by mobile tank formations, which (like Hannibal's cavalry) acted on the flanks and advanced along converging directions.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, in connection with the withdrawal of Soviet troops, a number of major encirclement operations were carried out by German troops. An attempt by the Soviet command to carry out such an operation during the counteroffensive near Moscow ended unsuccessfully. The lack of forces affected, and even more - military art. Subsequently, having created tank armies, Soviet troops were able to pursue the enemy, strike him not only from the front, but go to the flanks and even go to the rear. Mustaches were created

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conditions for encircling large enemy groupings with the aim of their subsequent defeat or capture.

In the operation carried out by the Soviet command near Stalingrad, the first major operation to encircle the enemy was prepared and successfully carried out for the first time, as a result of which the 6th German Army of Field Marshal Paulus was defeated. In subsequent years, encirclement operations were carried out near Korsun-Shevchenkovsky (spring 1944), in Belorussia (summer 1944), Yassko-Kishinevskaya (autumn 1944), several operations at the beginning of 1945.

In the first encirclement operations, the Soviet command paid special attention to the actions of troops on the inner front of the encirclement, fearing the enemy's attempts to break out of the formed "cauldron". It is quite understandable that the main forces were sent there, including tank formations. The external front was considered secondary, which is why it became vulnerable to enemy attacks from the outside. The troops operating on this front, as a rule, went over to the defensive, which gave the enemy time to create a deblocking grouping, prepare and carry out an offensive operation. Therefore, even successfully launched operations often did not develop to the scale that they should have had according to the plan.

In subsequent operations, starting with Belorussian, the Soviet command begins to create a mobile outer front of the encirclement, primarily by sending mobile formations to it. These formations, having barely completed the encirclement of the enemy, immediately begin

whether to develop an offensive in depth without giving the enemy time to come to his senses. As a result of this, the outer front of the encirclement quickly moved away from the inner one, and the offensive operation received its further development. At the same time, the enemy troops, who found themselves in the ring, having lost hope of outside help and seeing the expansion of the encirclement front, as a rule, soon ceased resistance.

Korsun-Shevchenko operation. At the beginning of January

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In 1944, troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front (commanded by General of the Army N. F. Vatutin) liberated Zhitomir and Berdichev. On January 10-11, the advanced units of the 38th, 40th general and 1st tank armies reached the approaches to Vinnitsa, Zhmerinka, Uman and Zhashkov. As a result of the operation, the formations of the front advanced 20-80 kilometers and from the north covered the enemy grouping located in the Kanev area. On January 5, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (commander General of the Army I. S. Konev) went on the offensive and captured Kirovograd.

As a result of the Zhytomyr-Berdichevsk and Kirovograd operations, a ledge was formed by the enemy in the area of the Korsun-Shevchenkivsky settlement. Formations of the enemy's 8th field and 1st tank armies, consisting of nine infantry divisions, the SS Viking Panzer Division, the SS Valonia motorized brigade, six assault gun battalions and a separate tank battalion, operated directly in the ledge. According to Soviet historians, the average number of infantry divisions was about 8,500 people. These troops were armed with 1640 guns and mortars, 140 tanks and assault guns.

In numbers, directly in the area of the ledge, the German troops were inferior to the Soviet ones: in infantry by 1.7 times, in artillery - 2.4 times, in tanks and self-propelled guns - 2.7 times. But despite the fact that at that time the 2nd Tank Army (372 tanks) was also part of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the superiority of the Soviet troops was much greater. In addition, it should be taken into account that the 2nd Air Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front (503 aircraft, commanded by Lieutenant General of Aviation S.A. Krasovsky) and the 5th Air Army 2nd Ukrainian Front (551 aircraft, commander of Lieutenant General of Aviation S.K. I am burning NOV).

By the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of January 12, 1944, it was ordered to liquidate the Korsun-Shevchenko group

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feasting on the enemy by encircling and destroying the German troops stationed there. The operation began on January 24, 1944 with a breakthrough in the enemy's defenses. Almost immediately, tank formations were introduced into the gap, which began an offensive from the east and west in the general direction of Zvenigorodka. On January 28, tanks of the 20th Tank Corps of the 5th Guards Tank Army broke into Zveny Gorodok, where they soon joined up with the soldiers of the 233rd Brigade of the 6th Tank Army. The encirclement of the enemy in the area of Korsun-Shevchenkovsky was successfully completed.

But it was not possible to immediately begin to eliminate the encircled group. The enemy, also trying to break through to his encircled troops, inflicted heavy blows with tank divisions on the outer front of the encirclement. These attempts were repulsed from the spot. All of them were successfully repulsed by formations of the 40th and 53rd combined arms and two tank armies, reinforced by rifle formations.

At that time, on the inner front of the encirclement, the main forces of the three combined arms armies and one cavalry corps, with an offensive in converging directions, began an operation to destroy the enemy located there. The defeat of the encircled group was completed on February 17.

Thus, in the Korsun-Shevchenko operation, Soviet troops inflicted another major defeat on the enemy. Over 55 thousand German soldiers and officers were killed and wounded, 18.2 thousand were taken prisoner. In addition, more than 800 enemy aircraft, 2,250 guns and mortars, and 12,000 vehicles were destroyed and captured (History of Military Art. Vol. 3. Military Academy named after M. V. Frunze, 1961. - P. 84-95 ).

True, according to Field Marshal E. von Manstein, a large group of troops surrounded in the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky area still managed to escape. He claims that the number of those who left the encirclement reached 32 thousand people (E. Manstein, Lost Victories. - M., 1957. - P. 520).

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During the Korsun-Shevchenko operation, the losses of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts in killed and wounded amounted to a little more than 80 thousand people 1993. - S. 227).

In the summer of 1944, the Red Army carried out the Belarusian

operation - one of the largest strategic operations of the Great Patriotic War. In the course of this operation, the Soviet troops defeated the most numerous grouping of Nazi troops - Army Group Center, liberated Belarus, a significant part of Lithuania, Latvia and the eastern regions of Poland.

The Byelorussian operation is also characterized by its military art, including in the field of encirclement and defeat of large groupings of enemy troops in the areas of Vitebsk, Bobruisk and Minsk. But taking into account the previous operations, this time it was planned to use only rifle formations to create the inner front of the encirclement, and to create the outer front of the encirclement with mobile troops, i.e. constantly moving away from the area of encirclement, due to tank corps.

The operation began on June 22, and already on the third day of the operation, the troops of the 39th and 43rd armies united in the Gnezdilovo area, thus completing the encirclement of the Vitebsk group of German troops. At the same time, the troops operating on the outer front of the encirclement united at a distance of 12 to 40 kilometers from the encirclement area, continuing to advance in a southwestern direction.

From the second half of June 25, the troops of the 39th and part of the forces of the 43rd Army, with the active support of aviation, without an operational pause, began to eliminate the encircled enemy grouping. That and the next day, the encircled groups repeatedly made attempts to break out of the encirclement, but they all ended in failure. On June 17, the enemy's resistance was finally broken. By this time the troops

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encircled on the outer front, were already at a distance of 60-90 kilometers from the area surrounded by NII.

Thus, within five days, the enemy's Vitebsk grouping was surrounded and destroyed. During the operation, German troops lost 20 thousand people killed and more than 10 thousand people captured, as well as a lot of weapons and military equipment.

The encirclement and defeat of the Bobruisk grouping of the enemy was carried out by the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front (commander General of the Army K.K. Rokossovsky). This grouping was located at a greater depth than the Vitebsk. In this operation, in addition to the mobile groups of the 3rd and 65th armies (9th and 1st guards tank corps), a mobile front group was also created as part of the 5th guards tank army. The tank army received the task of entering the battle after the breakthrough of the army

on the third day of the operation in order to rapidly develop the offensive in depth.

The operation began on June 22, and on June 26 the encirclement of the Bobruisk enemy grouping was completed. After that, the mobile troops immediately began to develop an offensive in depth, and the troops operating on the internal front began to destroy the encircled enemy grouping.

During the Bobruisk operation, the enemy lost 74 thousand people killed and captured, a lot of weapons and military equipment. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing to a depth of 100-110 kilometers, engulfed the enemy's 4th army from the south.

Iasi-Chisinau operation. As a result of the defeat of German troops in the Right-Bank Ukraine and in the Crimea, Soviet troops entered the territory of Moldova and Romania.

On August 2, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command issued a directive to the fronts to conduct an operation to defeat the Yassko-Kishinev enemy grouping, the main component of which was to encircle and destroy the main forces of the South Ukraine Army Group.

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The operation began on 20 August. As a result of two days of fighting, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front broke through three enemy defense lines to a depth of 40 kilometers, expanding the breakthrough to 65 kilometers along the front. During this time, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, having repulsed the counterattacks of enemy infantry and tanks, advanced to a depth of up to 30 kilometers, expanding the breakthrough along the front to 95 kilometers. As a result of the successful offensive of the troops of the fronts, favorable conditions were created for the encirclement of the enemy troops located west of Chisinau.

In connection with the success achieved, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command issued a directive at 5 p.m. on August 21, in which it pointed out the need "By the combined efforts of the two fronts, quickly close the encirclement ring of the enemy in the Khushi region, and then narrow this ring in order to destroy or capture the Chisinau group against Nika".

This task was successfully carried out on August 24 by a combination of actions by rifle formations on the internal and tank (mechanized) formations on the outer front of the encirclement. At the same time, the outer front of the encirclement was mobile. Soviet troops reached both banks of the Prut River, creating a dense encirclement ring around five German army corps of the 6th and 8th armies and forced the surrender of the 3rd Romanian army.

By this time, the distance between the inner and outer fronts of the encirclement was about 85-100 kilometers.

The enemy decided to break out of the encirclement on his own.

To do this, having concentrated the main forces on a narrow section of the front, the Germans rushed to break through towards the Carpathians. The blow fell on the 52nd Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, despite the stubborn resistance of which, five enemy infantry divisions managed to break through the battle formations of this formation. |

To eliminate the breakthrough, the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was forced to send the 4th Guards Army, the 27th Rifle and

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23rd Panzer Corps, as well as a significant part of the combat aircraft available to the front. These forces managed to overtake and destroy the group that had broken through already beyond the Seret River, that is, at a distance of 110 kilometers from the breakthrough site.

About the enemy forces captured as a result of the encirclement of enemy troops in the Kishinev region, Soviet military history is "modestly" silent. True, it is known that during the Iasi-Kishinev operation from August 20 to September 3, 1944, Soviet troops destroyed 22 German divisions, including 18 divisions that were surrounded in the Chisinau area. At the same time, it is indicated that in the first four days of the operation alone, 16 enemy divisions and brigades were defeated, 208.6 thousand soldiers and officers were captured, including 25 generals, more than 3.5 thousand guns were put out of action and captured, 830 tanks and assault guns, 338 aircraft, 3.3 thousand vehicles and many other military equipment and weapons (The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. History of the Great Victory. - M., 2005. - P. 378).

During the Iasi-Kishinev operation, the Soviet troops irretrievably lost almost 140 thousand people (Russia and the USSR in the wars of the twentieth century: a statistical study. - M., 2001. - P. 298).

Thus, 1944 became the year of successful offensive operations by the Red Army on the entire Soviet-German front, some of which ended in the encirclement and destruction of large enemy groupings. The results of the offensive of the Soviet troops this year in all directions without exception were more than encouraging. The Red Army defeated 219 enemy divisions and 22 brigades. The enemy lost a total of 1,600,000 men, 6,700 tanks, 28,000 guns and mortars, and 12,000 aircraft. Fascist Germany was no longer able to make up for these losses. Ve-



The face was also the moral damage suffered by the enemy.

The year 1945 came, which was supposed to be the final year not only of the Great Patriotic War, but also

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Second World War. For this year, the Soviet command planned to carry out an offensive on a broad front in a number of strategic directions with the aim of decisively defeating the opposing enemy groupings. There were conditions for this. In connection with the reduction in the total length of the Soviet-German front to 2200 km instead of 4400 km in 1944, it became possible to practically double the composition of forces and means in selected directions, as a result of which it was possible to plan large-scale offensive operations, including encirclement .

In 1945, the encirclement of large enemy groupings was carried out mainly because the enemy troops firmly held their defense areas even with deep coverage and from the flanks.

The encirclement of the Budapest grouping became possible because the enemy, despite the significant numerical superiority of the Soviet troops, intends not only to keep Budapest behind him, but also to prevent the Red Army from entering Czechoslovakia and Austria. The operation was carried out by troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts.

The environment was carried out according to a previously worked out scheme. As a result of the main operation, by the end of December 26, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts united near Esztergom (35 km northwest of Budapest). The encirclement of the 188,000-strong enemy grouping (about 10 divisions and a number of units of the armed forces) was completed. On February 13, 1945, Budapest fell. The commander of the defense of the Hungarian capital, having lost all hope, ordered the white flag to be thrown out of the basement of the military school, where the remains of his headquarters were located. The last stronghold in southeastern Europe fell under the blows of Soviet weapons. The enemy in Budapest lost up to 50,000 killed and 138,000 captured.

Approximately according to the same scheme, the encirclement and destruction of the enemy grouping in Königsberg took place. However, in this case, on the outer front of the encirclement, the enemy, weakened to the limit, practically did not offer resistance. Therefore, the Soviet command

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nie had the opportunity to throw the main forces directly to storm the fortress, which in April 1945

For a year, it was defended by part of the forces of the German task force Zemland and the garrison, which included 4 infantry divisions, several separate regiments and Volkssturm battalions. In total, up to 130 thousand people, about 4 thousand guns and mortars, 108 tanks and assault guns, 170 aircraft. The fortress was a complex of fortifications of various eras. The city was surrounded by 15 ancient stone forts.

Troops of the 39th (Lieutenant General I.I. Lyudnikov), 43rd (Leutnant General A.P. Beloborodov), 50th (Lieutenant General F.P. Ozerov) and 11 th Guards (Lieutenant General K. N. Galitsky) armies. From the air, this grouping was provided by the 1st (Colonel-General T. T. Khryukin) and the 3rd (Colonel-General N.F. Papivnin) air armies, as well as long-range bomber formations of the 18th Air Army (Chief Air Marshal A E. Golovanov). In addition, the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, the 5th Guards and the 5th Bombardment Aviation Corps of the RVGK (2,400 aircraft) operated in the interests of these troops.

The assault on the fortress began on April 6, and on April 9, 1945, the fortress fell. During the Koenigsberg operation, about 42 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed, almost 92 thousand people were taken prisoner, including 1800 officers and 4 generals, led by the commandant of the fortress, General O. Lash. 2023 guns, 1652 mortars and 128 aircraft were captured (Storm of Koenigsberg. Collection. - Kaliningrad, 1966. - P. 194).

Vein. The offensive of the Soviet troops in this direction began on March 16. The enemy resisted, but his strength was fading uncontrollably. Therefore, on the night of March 20, the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front clarified the task of the 46th Army, which was to complete the encirclement and defeat of the Esztergomo-Tovaroshavskaya grouping of the enemy by the end of March 22, and part of the forces to develop the offensive

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direction towards Vienna. To isolate the enemy from the north, it was supposed to use the ships of the Danube River Flotilla.

On March 20, the 46th Army resumed the offensive. By the end of the same day, Soviet troops reached the Danube, thus closing the inner ring of encirclement around the main enemy forces. Its total length was 85 kilometers. The encircled group included the 96th and 711th German infantry divisions, the 23rd Hungarian infantry division, part of the forces of the Fegelyan cavalry division, and the 92nd motorized brigade. The total number of personnel of these troops exceeded 20 thousand people. It was armed with more than 880

guns and mortars, there were 32 tanks and self-propelled mustaches tanovok.

Breaking the encirclement from the outside was not carried out. Therefore, the rout of the encircled grouping began immediately after the completion of its envelopment without an operational pause. Nevertheless, the fighting on the inner front of the encirclement continued for five days. The encirclement was gradually shrinking. By the end of March 23, the enemy had captured an area measuring 14 kilometers along the front and 9 kilometers in depth. The encircled enemy, whose general command was taken by the commander of the 3rd Hungarian army, Colonel General Gauser, desperately resisted, constantly counterattacking the Soviet troops. On March 24, 8 counterattacks were carried out, on March 25 - 6 counterattacks with forces up to an infantry battalion, supported by assault guns, on March 26 - 2 more counterattacks.

Soviet troops repelled enemy counterattacks with the help of tanks and guns, brought to a straight line on vodka. However, each counterattack had a negative effect on the rate of advance of the troops of the 46th Army, which sometimes did not exceed 1-1.5 kilometers per day. The losses of the Soviet troops were also significant.

The final attack to defeat the enemy pressed against the river began on the night of March 27. After a 10-minute fire raid, formations of the 10th Guards Rifle Corps went on the offensive and, breaking

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enemy resistance, in some areas went to the Danube. After that, the resistance of the enemy began to decline, and mass surrender began. The Es-Tergomsko-Tovaroshavskaya grouping of the enemy ceased to exist. Favorable conditions were created for the development of an offensive against Vienna.

Berlin. During the encirclement and defeat of the Berlin grouping of the enemy, the main forces of the Soviet troops were thrown to the inner front of the encirclement, where G.K. Zhukov and I.S. [Th Ukrainian fronts. They took the city, what is called, impudently, that is, a very tough assault, without regard for any losses.

However, the enemy tried to free the 9th Army of General Busse, squeezed in a ring south of Berlin, by a blow from the outside. For the sake of this, the 12th Army of General V. Wenck went on the offensive on April 25th. But it didn't last long. The 5th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 102nd Rifle Corps repulsed the blow from the spot, and the next day the enemy's activity dropped sharply. Then, at the categorical demand of Keitel and Jodl, Wenck committed the last two divisions remaining in reserve and the 29th

made another attempt to break through to the 9th Army. But she was not successful either. The 2nd Air Army of General S. A. Krasovsky struck such a force that Venk had to abandon the further offensive. The next day, Keitel admitted that the attempt to unblock Berlin by strikes from the outside had completely failed, which he was forced to report to Hitler.

Nevertheless, 20,000 enemy soldiers and officers stubbornly fought their way out of the encirclement to join Wenck's army. On the night | May they went to the rear of the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps, which was defending against the [2nd Army. Only 3-4 km remained between those leaving the encirclement and Wenck's army.

To help him, the commander of the 4th Guards Tank Army threw all his reserves. Fierce battles broke out. In an effort to prevent connections

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tivnik, the Soviet troops strained all their forces. Even the wounded did not leave the battle formations. The attack aircraft of the 1st Guards Aviation Corps, General V.G., played a decisive role. Ryazanov. Through the joint efforts of tankers and pilots, the enemy was defeated.

| In May, the 9th Army and the encircled part of the 4th Panzer Army of the enemy stopped resistance and threw out the white flag. In this encirclement, the Germans lost 60 thousand killed, and 120 thousand people surrendered. Only a few managed to break through to the west. As trophies, the Soviet troops got more than 300 tanks and assault guns, 500 cannons and mortars, more than 7 thousand cars and many other property.

## CONCLUSION

Few people in our country have not read books or seen a film based on the work of Yuri Bondarev "Hot Snow". In it, he historically accurately conveyed the events that took place on the outer front of the encirclement of the Stalingrad enemy grouping in December 1942. However, only a short period of time is described in this novel, during which parts of the cover of the army of General Bessonov in the Volga steppe at the turn of the Myshkov River are forced to withstand the blow of the tank divisions of Field Marshal Manstein, who sought to break through the corridor to the army of Paulus surrounded by Stalingrad. The duration of the novel is limited to two days and two endless December nights, during which the heroes of Y. Bondarev selflessly defend a tiny patch of land from German tanks, showing amazing courage and heroism.

In fact, the fierce battles on the outer front of the encirclement in the second half of December 1942 had a much greater scope and were part of a large operation in which the armies of several fronts were involved. The fate of not only the grouping of German troops encircled near Stalingrad, but also the fate of the entire Great Patriotic War depended on their course and outcome. The Kotelnikovo operation was only a part of the great strategic plan of the Soviet command, which, unfortunately, was not destined to come true.

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At the same time, its results were very impressive. According to the results of the Kotelnikovskaya operation, the Soviet Information Bureau cited the following data: "During the offensive south of Stalingrad (meaning the offensive against the Gota-Manstein group), our troops advanced 100-150 km and liberated more than 130 settlements. During the fighting from December 12 to 30, our troops defeated the 6th, 17th and 23rd tank and 16th motorized divisions of the Germans, the 4th and 18th infantry, 5th and 8th cavalry divisions of the Romanians. The fascist German troops lost only 21,000 men killed, and 5,200 enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. Among the rich trophies captured by our troops: 40 aircraft, 94 tanks, 292 guns, 329 motor vehicles, as well as many other weapons, aviation and tank equipment. During the fighting, our troops destroyed 306 aircraft, 467 tanks, 257 guns, 945 motor vehicles and many other military property.

The battle in the Kotelnikov area consisted of two parts: defensive and offensive. Its defensive part completely fell on the shoulders of the 51st Army, in the offensive this army was joined by the troops of two more armies. Thanks to the offensive phase of the operation, the gap separating the group encircled near Stalingrad from the external front line increased from 35 to 200-250 kilometers.

Soviet authors, including the same Yu. Bondarev, considered the actions of the Soviet troops near Stalingrad exclusively with a high degree of appreciation of their military art. It was preferable to remain silent or speak very carefully about the failures in the implementation of the operational and strategic plans of the Soviet command. At the same time, failures and miscalculations not only took place, but also led to a number of grave consequences, to huge unjustified human and material losses. German and Western military experts did not hide this in their writings. So, a former major general of the German army and a direct participant

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During the Battle of Stalingrad, Hans Derr wrote in his book "The March on Stalingrad": "It must nevertheless be said that the command and troops of the enemy - the 51st and 2nd armies of the Russians - did not use a number of advantageous situations. With more energetic and quick action, such a vastly superior enemy as the Russian 51st Army was, could have defeated the 57th Tank Corps already on January 24 or 25 between Kotelnikovo and the river. Aksai. Not a single one of the continuous Russian attacks on the flanks of the 4th Panzer Army exposed after the departure of the Romanians was carried out energetically and boldly, not a single one of the tactical successes was quickly used; in the Russian counter-offensive that followed the failure of the deblocking offensive, there was no clear operational plan, although this operation could bring rich fruits.

Nevertheless, the defeat of the strike force Gota-Manstein in the battles at the turn of the Aksai and Myshkov rivers was essential for the subsequent development of events on the entire southern wing of the Soviet-German front. In this regard, the assessment of these battles given by the former Hitlerite lieutenant general of the tank troops F. V. von Mellenthin in his book Tank Battles 1939-1945 is not without interest. In it, he wrote: "During this period, events full of tragedy took place, the historical significance of which can hardly be overestimated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the battle on the banks of this unknown river (Aksai. - A.E.) led to the crisis of the Third Reich, put an end to Hitler's hopes for an empire and was a decisive link in the chain of events that predetermined the defeat of Germany.

In this case, Mellenthin was not far from the truth. In fact, the fighting at the turn of the Aksai and Myshkovo rivers finally put an end to attempts to free the encircled, and therefore predetermined their final defeat. Having described the battles on the Aksai River in some detail and expressively, Mellenthin commented on the nature of these battles: "The characteristic features of these tragic battles were high mobility, quick reaction and extraordinary stamina on both sides. main combat

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tanks were the means, and each side understood that the main task of tanks was to fight enemy tanks.

The Russians did not stop their attacks after dark and sought to immediately and decisively build on any emerging success. Sometimes the attacks were carried out by tanks racing at top speed, and it must be admitted that the high pace of the offensive and the concentration

The expansion of forces was the main reason for the success of the Russians. Depending on the prevailing situation, the direction of tank strikes quickly changed.

After the successful completion of the operations of the Soviet troops in the Middle Don and in the Kotelnikov area, large opportunities opened up for the formations and units operating in the south to attack the Don Bass and Rostov-on-Don, which could lead to cutting off and subsequent defeat of the entire grouping of enemy troops. located in the North Caucasus. However, the moral and material stress that the Soviet troops suffered in the December battles did not allow them to fulfill this plan, and the Great Patriotic War did not develop for another year and a half.

APPS

Chronicle of events in the Stalingrad region, December 1942

December 1, Tuesday

The following divisions were transferred to the Stalingrad direction: the 7th artillery division (Colonel A.F. Pavlov); 223rd Bomber Aviation (Colonel L.N. Yuzeev); 285th Bomber Aviation (Colonel V.A. Sandalov).

From the directive of the commander of the Stalingrad Front: "[1. The encircled Stalingrad grouping of the enemy continues to defend stubbornly in the area of Stalingrad, Orlovka, Malaya Rossoshka, Karpovka, Tsybenko, Elshanka. At the same time, an enemy grouping is observed in the Kotelnikovo area and in the Yash-Kul-Elista area ... ". |

From the operational summary of the High Command of the Ground Forces: "Vostok. Army Group Don: There were no significant events in Army Group Gotha. 6th Army: During yesterday's day, the army achieved great success in defense. All enemy attacks made by large forces in the northwestern and southern sectors were repulsed. The enemy suffered heavy losses in men. Data on prisoners and trophies has not yet been received. With the improvement of the weather, the supply is carried out according to the plan. On the section of the railway to the west of St. Chir managed to basically repel all enemy attacks. Only in the northeastern sector of the front did the enemy succeed in capturing one settlement. Countermeasures taken. On the rest of the front, Army Groups Don and B did not conduct significant hostilities.

December 2, Wednesday

From the operational directive of the commander of the South-Western Front to the commander of the 3rd Guards Army on the combat composition and tasks of the army in an offensive operation to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping in the Millerovsky direction in cooperation with the 1st Guards and 5th Tank armies (Operation Saturn): "... The troops of the Southwestern Front, introducing additional forces into battle, go ... on a general offensive with the task of encircling and destroying the main forces of the 8th Italian army, the remnants of the 3rd Romanian army and operational reserves of the Germans deployed against the Southwestern Front from other directions. At the same time, on its left flank, the front continues its offensive in the Morozovsky and Tormosinsky directions with the aim of destroying the enemy forces operating in these directions and reaching the Ilyinka front, northwest. Morozovsky, b. Kalitva, r. Sev. Donets to the mouth.

December 3, Thursday

From the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the approval of the plan for operation "Saturn": "Comrade. Fedorov. Tov. Filippov. Tov. Voronov.

Plan of operation "Saturn" from December 2 with. d. to approve.

The readiness of the operation, i.e., the completion of the preparations for the operation, the supply of ammunition, the bringing of troops and aviation to full combat readiness, should be timed to coincide with December 9th.

Occupation of the starting position - on the night of December 10. The start of the operation is December 10.

The leadership of the aviation of both fronts is assigned to the lieutenant general of aviation comrade. Falaleeva.

The coordination of the actions of both fronts in preparing the operation and carrying it out is entrusted to Colonel General of Artillery Comrade. Voronova.

December 4, Friday

The 4th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Division (Colonel A.S. Makashu TIN) was transferred to the Stalingrad direction.

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Order of the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front to the commander of the strike group of the 1st Guards Army in the Bogucharsky direction on the procedure for occupying the initial position for the offensive and readiness for formation



check water barriers: "Accept the following instructions for execution:

1. The final readiness of your troops in all respects by the outcome of December 9, 1942. 2. The procedure for occupying the starting position for the offensive ...".

From the combat report of the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief: "... 1st Guards Army. On the sector of Dubovskaya and to the north of Dubovskaya, the enemy attacked with force up to a regiment; attacks repulsed. Our units are in the same position. When the attack was repulsed, 27 prisoners belonging to the 7th Romanian infantry division were captured. Up to 300 enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed.

December 5, Saturday

The 9th Artillery Division (Colonel M.G. Kultashev) was transferred to the Stalingrad direction.

The Stalingrad Defense Committee sent 273 regional volunteers to the headquarters of the partisan movement of the Stalingrad Front to work behind enemy lines.

From the order of the headquarters of the Don Front to the commander of the 21st Army for a further offensive: "The commander of the front ordered:

Clarify the situation and the position of the army units, put the units in order, replenish supplies and carefully organize the battle, paying special attention to the organization of interaction between infantry, artillery and tanks.

On December 5, 1942, the units of the 277th Rifle Division and the 52nd Rifle Division, reinforced with tanks and strong artillery, went on the offensive with the task of capturing the Dmitrievka-Poltavsky-Otorvanovka area and developing an attack on Karpovka.

From 12.00 5.12 the 65th Army continues its offensive in the general direction to Novo-Alekseevsky with the task of capturing heights 73.4, 103.1 with its right-flank units.

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From the order of the headquarters of the Don Front to the commander of the 65th Army for a further offensive: "The commander of the front ordered:

Understand the situation, clarify the position of the army units, put them in order, replenish supplies and carefully organize the battle, paying special attention to the organization of interaction between infantry, artillery and KOV tanks.

From 12.00 5.12.42 go on the offensive with all your might

252nd and 304th Rifle Divisions and the left flank of the 23rd Rifle Division from the 122.8-6 line. 103.1 and mound +1.0. The 27th and 24th divisions are to gain a foothold at the reached line - 700 meters west. Baburkin. The forward detachments of all advancing divisions should be pushed to the west bank of the river by the end. Rossoshki.

From the order of the commander of the Don Front to the commander of the 24th Army for a further offensive: "The commander of the front ordered:

Understand the situation, clarify the position of the army units, put them in order, replenish supplies and carefully organize the battle, paying special attention to the organization of interaction between infantry, artillery and KOV tanks.

From 1200 on 12/5/42 go on the offensive with all the forces of at least three rifle divisions, reinforced with tanks and powerful artillery, with the task of capturing the area of state farm No. 1 - high. 117.5.

By the end of the day advance detachments to push to the line: zap. bank of the river Rossoshki - Zapadnovskaya beam - zap. say you high 137.2 - Borodin.

December 6, Sunday

From the order of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the commander of the | th Guards Army on changing the tasks of the troops in the upcoming offensive operation: "Introduce the following amendments to the assignment of tasks to your troops:

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No later than the 5th day of the operation, build a supply front with two rifle divisions on the line (claim) Kononovka, Belovodsk, Danilovka, Mashlykino, (claim) Voloshino.

By the end of the 3rd day of the operation, by the end of the 3rd day of the operation, the forward units of the rifle divisions would reach the line Degtevo, Setrakovskiy, Meshkov and securely seize the road between these points. At the same time, send one of the divisions of the 4th Guards Rifle Corps to Degtevo.

December 7, Monday

From the report of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief about the situation in the front line and the oncoming battle in the 5th strike zone

noah army:

During the day, the 1st Guards Army occupied the former defensive lines, improved them in terms of engineering, and in some areas conducted artillery mortar and rifle-machine gun fire with the enemy. At 14.15 in the area of height 197.2 (Verkhne Krivskoy area), a Focke-Wulf aircraft was shot down by rifle and machine-gun fire. The crew of three was captured. The enemy did not take active actions during the day; in the afternoon, he intensified artillery fire on the combat formations of units of the 197th and 298th rifle divisions. Enemy aircraft carried out single reconnaissance flights.

On the site of the 5th TA (tank army) from Surovikino to Rychkovskaya, stubborn battles took place, which took on the character of a meeting battle. The fights on the right bank of the river had the most stubborn character. Chir, where, as established by captured documents, at 7.30 the enemy launched a counteroffensive with the forces of the 336th Infantry Division, trying to eliminate the bridgehead we occupied on the front (claim) Surovikino, Ostrovsky, Lisinsky. Met by organized artillery fire and following that attack by the 1st Tank Corps of the 333rd Rifle Division and the main forces of the 3rd Guards Kavale

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The counterattacking enemy was overthrown by the Ryan corps, thrown back from the line he occupied, and the front of his defense was broken through. Towards the end of the day, our units reached the line of an unnamed settlement (3 km south of Surovikino) - Sysoikin - MTF (4 km southeast of Sysoikin) - Lisinsky. The 8th Motorcycle Regiment was brought into the breach to operate behind enemy lines. Among the captured documents was a combat order for the offensive of the 336th Infantry Division, whose headquarters was located in Verkhne-Solonovsky. There were no changes in the area of Yeritsky, Verkhne-Chirskaya. The offensive of the units of the 258th Rifle Division and the 4th Guards Rifle Division against these points was not successful. The 4th Guards Rifle Division is waging a street battle in Rychkovsky with part of its forces. 12/08/42 units of the 5th TA (tank army) will develop success on the right bank of the river. Chir. The 47th Guards Rifle Division from the army reserve, the 8th Tank Brigade and units of the 5th Mechanized Corps are being brought to this direction. Enemy aircraft on the left flank acted actively. In total, up to 300 sorties were noted.

December 8, Tuesday

From the report of the commander of the troops of the Stalingrad Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the limited results of the offensive of the armies of the right

wing of the front and the concentration of enemy reserves in the Tormosin - Nizhne-Chirskaya area:

On December 8, the 62nd Army and the 64th Army continued their offensive against the encircled Stalingrad grouping of the enemy, but, having met with organized fire, stubborn resistance, and counterattacks by infantry with enemy tanks, they advanced insignificantly—by 600-1,000 meters in the area of kurgan plus 1 ,0 and in the region of high. 136.1 in the direction of Oak ravine. By the end of the day, the battle was fierce and stubborn. In the area of the north-west. and app. Logovsky to the east. bank of the river Don continued clearing the forest. Overcoming stubborn resistance, parts of the 4th mechanized corps advanced 600 meters

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and are fighting in the depths of the forest south of Rychkovsky. There were no active hostilities on the other sectors of the front.

The enemy in the offensive sector of the 62nd and 64th armies put up fierce resistance and went over to counter attacks with infantry and tanks. From the Voroponovo region and the south. part of Stalingrad, the enemy on motor transport picked up troops and on the move brought them into battle against the advancing units of the 64th Army. In the region of Tormosin, Nizhne Chirskaya, an accumulation of up to 100 tanks and 500 vehicles was established. Enemy aviation during the day made about 200 sorties, of which about 150 were transport aircraft.

On the sector of the 51st Army, the enemy carried out active combat reconnaissance and tried to break into the disposition of the 91st Rifle Division in the Kenkrya area, but was driven back by counterattacks by units of the division. 18 prisoners of the 8th Cavalry Division (Romanians) were captured.

From the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the formation of the 5th shock army as part of the Stalingrad Front and its tasks: "The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

From December 9, 1942, form the 5th shock army as part of the Stalingrad Front, including the 4th Guards Rifle Division, 258, 300, 315, 87th Rifle Divisions, 4th Mechanized Corps, 7th and 23rd Tank Corps and 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps.

Establish a dividing line between the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts: Staro-Maximovsky - Tormosin - Apanaskino - all inclusive for the Stalingrad Front. Establish a dividing line between the 5th shock and 51st armies: for the 5th shock - Arm.-Ivanovka (east of Gromoslavka) - (claim.) Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya and further along the Don River to Kon

Wednesday, December  
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formed and transferred to the Stalingrad Front the 5th shock army under the command of Lieutenant General M.M. Popov. The 51st Army received reinforcements.

From the report of the Chief of the General Staff, representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, General A.M. Vasilevsky to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of considerations on the use of the 5th shock army: "Comrade. Vasiliev. I am reporting for your approval the considerations developed jointly with Dontsov on the use of Yakovlev's army.

We are taking all measures to ensure that the available forces of the Don Front (21st, 65th, 24th armies) eliminate the enemy west of the river. Rossoshka and, having cleared the area of Dmitrievka, Karpovka, Marinovka from it by the arrival of Yakovlev, go to the western bank of the river. Rossoshka. Taking into account the presence of artillery, tanks, and most importantly, the reinforcements arriving these days for rifle divisions, we consider this task feasible. ...

The operation to defeat the encircled enemy grouping, as you personally pointed out, I consider it necessary to carry out sequentially, namely: the first stage - by the forces of the Don Front to eliminate up to 4 enemy infantry divisions and its mobile detachments west of the river. Rossoshka; the second stage was to isolate and then capture the enemy troops in the southern front of the encircled grouping by attacking the Don Front in a southeasterly direction on Voroponovo and the 64th Army of the Stalingrad Front on Voroponovo from the south through Peschanka. The third stage is to finally break his resistance with a blow from all the armies of the Don and Stalingrad fronts in the general direction of Gumrak. The troops of the Don Front began to carry out the first stage on December 8 in order to deprive the enemy of the possibility of maneuver, the 66th, 64th and 62nd armies simultaneously began and continue their operations.

December 10, Thursday

At the suggestion of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Colonel-General N.N. Voronov, due to the incomplete concentration of troops, the start of Operation Saturn was postponed to December 16, 1942.

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Order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief I.V. Stalin to the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief - representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov: "Mikhailov's considerations are being transmitted to you. Report your opinions. From the telegram, the role of the 57th Army in the general offensive to eliminate the encircled enemy is not visible. After a conversation with Mikhailov, it became clear that the 57th Army would operate from the area of Rakitino, Kravtsov and Tsybenko in the general direction towards the Gornaya Polyana state farm and Peschanaya Balka.

From the directive of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the commander of the 5th Panzer Army, Lieutenant General P.L. Romanenko: "Your decision for December 10, 1942 is being approved. The main task is to break up the approaching units of the Nizhne-Chirsky enemy grouping and develop an offensive in the Nizhne-Chirsky-Tormosinsky direction, for which massive use of your powerful artillery, RS and tanks, to achieve linkage of actions with the neighbor on the left (4th mechanized corps of the Stalingrad front). Your decision and the situation in front of your left flank will immediately be transferred to the Stalingrad Front for coordinating actions.

December 11, Friday

The headquarters of the Supreme High Command basically approved the plan for the destruction of the Nazi group surrounded at Stalingrad (Operation Ring). Its idea was to dismember the encircled grouping and liquidate it piece by piece with a strike from west to east.

The directive of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the Chief of the General Staff - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, General A.M. Vasilevsky on the operation "Ring":

Operation "Ring" is carried out in two stages.

The first stage is the exit to the Basargino-Voroponovo region and the liquidation of the western and southern groups of the enemy.

The second stage is a general assault on the fronts to eliminate the bulk of the enemy troops to the west and northwest of Stalingrad.

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The operation of the first stage should be started no later than the date established during the telephone conversation between Vasiliev and Mikhailov.

The operation of the first stage must be completed no later than December 23.

December 12, Saturday

In the morning, 2 tank divisions of the Nazi troops from the Don Army Groups under the command of G. Goth launched an offensive. The Nazis delivered a powerful tank strike from Kotelnikov on a narrow front along the Tikhoretsk-Stalingrad railway in the defense zone of the 51st Army, Major General N.I. Trufanov. E. Manshtein planned a connection with the army of F. Paulus southwest of Tundutovo. Using superiority in men and artillery by 2 times, and in tanks by more than 6 times, the Nazis broke through the defenses of the Stalingrad Front at the Kurmoyarsky station, and by the end of the day the tank units of the Nazis reached the bank of the Aksai River and in the area north of Nebykovo.

The command of the Stalingrad Front sent the 235th flamethrower tank brigade and the 87th rifle division to help the 51st Army.

From the order of the commander of the Don Front to the commander of the 21st Army: "The enemy, with a force of up to two infantry regiments and up to 100 tanks, went on the offensive in the morning of 12/12/42 and pressed our units in the Gremyachiy area. According to unverified information, the enemy has concentrated a significant number of tanks in the area of sowing. lag. them. Voroshilova - Karpovka with the aim of breaking through to the south and southwest from this area ...".

December 13, Sunday

At dawn, Manstein's troops resumed their offensive. Massed tank strikes with the support of aviation, the Nazis significantly expanded the front of the breakthrough. In the battle against enemy troops, the Stalingrad Front introduced the 13th mechanized corps and 30 attack aircraft of the 8th air army. But stop

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the furious onslaught of the Nazis failed. By the end of the day, G. Goth's tank divisions came out kr. Aksai, captured two bridgeheads on its northwestern bank of the river and captured Verkhne-Kumsky.

From the report of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation in the front line and the course of the offensive in the 5th Panzer Army zone:

"Over the past day, the enemy did not show much activity at the front, conducted rare rifle and machine-gun mortar fire at our battle formations, tried to counterattack units of the 5th mechanized corps. Its aviation in small groups of 3-5 aircraft bombed

la in some places the battle formations of units of the 1st Guards Army and the area of Nizh. Mamontov.

The 1st Guards Army occupies the former line of defense, improving it in terms of engineering. There are no changes in the position of the parts.

The 3rd Guards Army occupies the former line of defense, making a partial regrouping of forces. There are no significant changes in the position of the parts.

The 5th TA (tank army), occupying the former line of defense, carried out a partial regrouping of forces. At 10.00, units of the 258th Infantry Division captured Rychkovskiy, developing an offensive on Verkhne-Chirskaya. Parts of the army repelled enemy counterattacks in the direction of Nizh. Kalinovka to a height of 161.0 and to high. 117.0. The enemy suffered significant losses and was thrown back to its original position.

December 14, Monday

From the directive from the Commander of the Southwestern Front to the Commander of the 3rd Guards Army on refining the plan of the offensive operation with the aim of defeating the Bokovo-Morozov grouping of the enemy in cooperation with the 1st Guards Army (Operation Little Saturn):

"The liquidation of the Stalingrad grouping of the enemy dragged on. The enemy persistently conducts attacks from

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Nizhne-Chirskaya and Kotelnikovo districts in the north-east. on board. Romanenko is marking time. In order to quickly eliminate the Stalingrad grouping of the enemy, the Headquarters ordered the Southwestern Front to strike in the general direction to the southeast through N. Astakhov to Morozovsky with the immediate task of destroying the 8th Italian Army with the forces of the 1st and 31st Guards Armies and continue to advance in the direction indicated above. The situation calls for swift and decisive action. Action plan of the 3rd Guards Army

it remains valid".

From the order of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the commander of the 1st Guards Army on the timing of the start of the offensive operation in the Bogucharo-Millerovsky direction (Operation "Small Saturn"):

The beginning of the offensive - December 16, 1942,

start of artillery preparation - 8.00,

start of the attack - 9.30,



duration of artillery preparation - 1.30.

The deadline is final and cannot be postponed in any case. Ensure full readiness of troops.

December 15, Tuesday

Rifle divisions were transferred to the Stalingrad direction: the 49th Guards (Major General D.P. Podshivailov), the 387th (Colonel A.K. Makariev), the 24th Guards (Major General P.K. Koshevoy), 3rd Guards (Major General K.A. Tsalikov).

A directive was issued from the commander of the Southwestern Front to the commander of the 1st Guards Army, Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov on refining the plan of the offensive operation with the aim of destroying the 8th Italian Army as soon as possible.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command assigned to the Chief of the General Staff - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, General A.M. Vasilevsky leadership of operations to repel and defeat the German Army Group "Don".

Troops of the Stalingrad Front: 4th mechanized corps V.T. Volsky and the tank regiment of the 87th Rifle Division

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Zii in a meeting battle struck at the enemy, knocked out fascist tanks from Verkhne-Kumsky. The enemy retreated to the line of the Aksai River.

December 16, Wednesday

Rifle divisions were transferred to the Stalingrad direction: 160th (Colonel M.P. Seryugin), 172nd (Colonel G.S. Sorokin), 350th (Major General A.P. Gritsenko), 267th (Colonel A.K. Kudryashov, from December 18, 1942 - Colonel V.A. Gerasimov); divisions: 8th artillery division (major general of artillery P.M. Rozhanovich), 202nd bomber aviation division (colonel S.I. Nechiporenko), 290th assault aviation division (colonel P.I. Mironenko).

Report of the headquarters of the Don Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief I.V. Stalin and the Chief of the General Staff - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command A.M. Vasilevsky (on the situation in the front line):

"The troops of the Don Front during 16.12 continued to strengthen their positions, conducted reconnaissance of the enemy, and part of the forces of the 65th Army fought for the capture of high.

126.1 (6 km northwest of Baburkin). The enemy, holding the former lines, fired infrequently with rifle and machine-gun fire at the combat formations of our troops and, in separate sectors, tried to conduct reconnaissance in force with small groups of infantry and tanks. Its aviation with single planes continued reconnaissance of our troops, especially in the zone of the 21st Army, and groups of fighters patrolled the area surrounded by their troops, covering the landing of transport aircraft.

Sergeant V.N., squad leader of the 350th Infantry Division Prokatov closed the embrasure of the enemy bunker with his chest.

December 17, Thursday

From the report of the commander of the Southwestern Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation in the front line and the transition to the offensive against Bogucharo

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Millerovsky direction (Operation "Small Saturn"):

"...FIGHTING continues at night to carry out the tasks of the day, clear mines and make passages for tank corps."

The city committee of the party considered the issue of restoring the municipal and housing infrastructure of the Kirovsky district as a temporary center of Stalingrad.

December 18, Friday

From the report of Colonel-General A.M. Vasilevsky to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation on the fronts of the Stalingrad direction and the proposal for a plan for the further use of the 5th shock army:

"By the morning of December 18, on the fronts of the Stalingrad direction, they had the following situation: on the Aksay River in the Novoaksaysky - Shestakov - Verkhne-Kumsky area, for the fifth day, the Volsky corps, reinforced by a tank brigade and two separate regiments of the Stalingrad Front, the 13th mechanized corps and the 20th fighter the anti-tank brigade, reinforced by units of the 87th rifle division, is engaged in a stubborn and successful battle with the 6th and 23rd tank divisions and one enemy infantry and motorized division, which are trying to break through to the north to the encircled Stalingrad grouping. Attempts by the enemy in the second half of December 17... on a narrow front... to break through to Gromoslavka were repulsed with heavy losses for him. Just returned from Volsky comrade. Fedorenko reported that the enemy as a result

attacks again left several dozen tanks knocked out in the Verkhne-Kumsky area. By the end of December 17, Volsky had 135 tanks. The hull works great. On December 17, the 13th mechanized corps pushed the enemy back along the river. Myshkov and further to Abganerovo (outer bypass of the former Stalingrad fortified area). The 300th, 98th, 3rd Guards, and partly the 87th and 38th Rifle Divisions have been deployed ... All of these units are ready to take on the enemy's attack from the south, but at the moment they have no contact with the enemy.

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December 19, Saturday

From the directive of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the representatives of the Supreme Command Headquarters on the appointment of Colonel-General of Artillery N.N. Voronov as Deputy A.M. Vasilevsky:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command believes that Comrade Voronov has quite satisfactorily fulfilled his task of coordinating the actions of the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts, and after the Sixth Army of the Voronezh Front was transferred to the subordination of the Southwestern Front, Comrade Voronov's mission can be considered exhausted. Comrade Voronov is sent to the region of the Stalingrad and Don Fronts as Comrade Vasilevsky's deputy in the case of the liquidation of encircled enemy troops near Stalingrad. Comrade Voronov, as a representative of the Stavka and Deputy Vasilevsky, is instructed to submit to the Stavka no later than December 21 a plan for breaking through the defenses of the enemy troops surrounded at Stalingrad, and whether their elimination within five to six days.

In a fierce battle near the Verkhne-Kumsky farm, Lieutenant Colonel Azi Aslanov especially distinguished himself. The brave commander, despite the shelling of the enemy, every now and then opened the upper hatch of the tank in order to better see the battlefield and turn the tanks to where our infantry was threatened by enemy tanks. He showed an example of courage and stand

bones.

December 20, Sunday

From the report of the commander of the Stalingrad front I.V. Stalin:

"The troops of the front fought stubborn battles with the advancing enemy tank grouping in the amount of 250 tanks and infantry units at the turn of Verkhne-Rubezhny - the southern outskirts of Nizhne-Kumsky - the southern outskirts of Va

silyevka ...".

2nd Guards Army under the command of General

Lieutenant R.Ya. Malinovsky on foot march on the 4th day arrived in the area of concentration, deployed combat

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orders on the Myshkovo River and immediately entered the battle. As a result, the balance of forces has shifted in our favour.

The guards fought hard and bloody battles against the advancing Nazi troops, the battles did not stop for a minute, the battle went on for every inch of our land. Here the outcome of the Battle of Stalingrad was decided. Guardsmen withstood, the furious onslaught of the Nazis was repulsed, at this line, 35-40 km from the encircled group of F. Paulus, on December 22, the offensive of Manstein's troops was stopped.

December 21, Monday

From the operational summary of the high command of the ver macht:

"During the offensive of the 57th Panzer Corps, only a little progress was made. A strong onslaught of the enemy on the bridgehead near Nizhne-Kumsky, which is held by the 17th Panzer Division. On the front of the 3rd Romanian Army, the enemy continues a strong onslaught in the Chira bend.

December 22, Tuesday

From the order of the commander of the Stalingrad Front on the readiness of troops on the Kotelnikovsky direction to repel enemy attempts to break through the line of defense along the Myshkovo River:

"From the morning of December 22, 1942, an offensive by the main forces ... of the enemy ... from the front of Kapkinka, Gromoslavka in the general direction to Verkhne-Tsaritsynsky and Zeta and from Tsybenko to the southeast should be expected.

The troops of the front must not allow a breakthrough of the defensive zone and, if wedged into the defense, destroy it with decisive counterattacks.

By the morning of December 22, 1942, the 7th Tank Corps should be concentrated in the area of the crossroads (7 km north of Gromoslavka) and subordinated to the commander of the 2nd Guards Army.

When the main enemy forces went on the offensive, the commander of the 2nd Guards decisive counterattack of the 7th Tank Corps and the 2nd Guards Mechanized

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the bathroom corps, together with the infantry, to destroy them, preventing them from spreading in the northern and north-eastern directions.

Prevent the 64th and 57th armies from breaking through the encircled enemy group to the south and southeast.

By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the medals "For the Defense of Leningrad", "For the Defense of Odessa", "For the Defense of Sevastopol", "For the Defense of Stalingrad" were established.

December 23, Wednesday

From the report of the commander of the South-Western Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation of the front's mobile formations on December 22-23, 1942: "I report specifically on the situation of the tank and mechanized corps":

The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps reached the Milyutinskaya line by 0600 on 12/23/42. |

The 25th Panzer Corps reached Pervomaiskoye at 8:00 22:12 with its main forces, routed the Rumanian 11th Infantry Division along the way, and captured the commander of this division. In the future, the corps acts on Morozovsky.

By 24:00 on 22:12, the 24th Panzer Corps reached Bolshinka and fought for Ilyinka.

The 18th Panzer Corps with the main forces in Degtevo. Prior to this, the corps took part in the defeat of the encircled enemy grouping in the area of Zhuravka, Verkhnya KOVSKY.

The 17th Panzer Corps, crushing the enemy along the way, captured Voloshino by the end of December 22 ...

December 24, Thursday

From the report of the chief of staff of the Stalingrad Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief about the disruption of the enemy's counterattack and the continuation of the front's offensive in the Kotelnikovsky direction:

"The troops of the front on December 24 went on the offensive in general

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in the direction of Kotelnikovo and, overcoming enemy resistance, advanced 4-16 km.

On the site of the 62nd Army in the area of the Krasny Oktyabr plant, the enemy was surrounded. In other directions, the troops continued to strengthen their defenses ...

The Kotelnikovskaya tank grouping of the enemy ... is putting up stubborn resistance to the advancing troops of the 2nd Guards Army and the 51st Army ... The enemy is putting up especially stubborn resistance at the turn of heights south of Verkhne-Kumsky ... In the rest of the front, the enemy did not show activity " .

December 25, Friday

From the order of the commander of the Southwestern Front:  
"During the day, aviation observed the enemy's retreat from Milyutinskaya in the direction of Chernyshkovsky and the enemy's approach from the Tormosin area ... The possibility of an enemy strike on your right flank from Oblivskaya is not ruled out."

I order:

346th Rifle Division from 24.00 25.12 reassign the 5th TA (tank army) ... and establish a new demarcation line between the 3rd guards and 5th tank armies: Leontievsky - 2nd farm of state farm No. 18 - Zopotovsky - Willow...

Tov. Romanenko to take measures to repel a possible enemy counterattack.

December 26, Saturday

From the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts.  
The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

The 5th shock army ... from 12 o'clock on December 26, 1942, to be transferred from the Stalingrad Front to the troops of the Southwestern Front.

Lieutenant General Popov M.M. appoint Deputy Commander of the South-Western Front in charge of directing the actions of the 5th Tank and 5th Shock Armies, relieving him of the post of Commander of the 5th Shock

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Army and Deputy Commander of the Stalingrad Front.

Assign Lieutenant General Tsvetaev V.D. commander of the blowing troops of the 5th shock army ...

Incorporate the 23rd Tank Corps into the 5th Tank Army. |

Consider the main task of the Southwestern Front on its left wing to be the elimination of the enemy in the area south of Surovikino and in the Chernyshkovsky area, and the capture of the Tormosin-Oblivskaya-Chernyshkovsky area.

Establish a dividing line between the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts from Kalach (Stalingrad) to the south along the Don River.

December 27, Sunday

From the report of the Chief of Artillery of the Red Army to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the plan to defeat the encircled Stalingrad enemy grouping:

"Presenting the plan for the defeat of the encircled Stalingrad enemy grouping for your approval, I report: the main blow is delivered by the forces of the Don Front - fourteen rifle divisions, eight tank regiments, thirty-two artillery regiments, nine guards. min regiments ... In the general direction to Baburkin - Gonchar's farm - Stalingrad - pos. Red October.

The purpose of the strike is to split the encircled grouping from west to east and sequentially destroy it along parts."

December 28, Monday

From Hitler's operational order:

"Army Group Don ... is obliged to do everything to preserve the conditions for the liberation of the 6th Army. It can only then withdraw its formations to the west, if it is absolutely necessary and only in the course of an uninterrupted battle in order to inflict as many losses on the enemy as possible ... ".

Commanders of the Don Front K.K. Rokossovsky

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and Stalingradsky - A.I. Eremenko turned to the soldiers and officers of the Nazi army, surrounded in the Stalingrad region. In the leaflet, they offered to stop the senseless resistance and capitulate.

December 29, Tuesday

The enemy with the remnants of his broken units and the war

with the troops that have withdrawn from the Kotelnikovo area, is trying to hold the Skosyrskaya, Morozovsk, Chernyshkovsky line in order to avoid encirclement by our troops east of the Seversky Donets River. In the Kotelnikovskiy direction, the enemy hurriedly retreats under the blows of our troops, leaving equipment and a large number of corpses on the battlefield.

December 30, Wednesday

After the defeat of the Don army group under the command of Field Marshal Manstein, the Stalingrad Front was transformed into the Southern Front, having received the strategic task of advancing on Rostov.

December 31, Thursday

From the final report of the commander of the Stalingrad Front  
A.I. Eremenko I.V. Stalin:

"... the Nazis twisted their necks near Stalingrad, they suffered a strategic defeat here.

In the battles for Stalingrad, the 62nd and 64th armies especially distinguished themselves at the first stage of the battle, and their troops showed unprecedented perseverance in the struggle and devotion to our Motherland. These armies deserve to be awarded orders, converted to guards and given the names "Stalingrad" ... And their commanders, Lieutenant General Chuikov and Lieutenant General Shumilov, are worthy of being awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

Troops of the 2nd Guards Army liberated Tormosin.

The most important documents on the Battle of Stalingrad

#### BATTLE ORDER OF THE STALINGRAD FRONT ON THE OFFENSIVE (OPERATION

"URAN") No. 00217 Headquarters of the Stalingrad Front. Map 1:100,000  
November 9, 1942

1. The German divisions defeated by us in Stalingrad were again replenished and launched a new offensive against the 62nd Army, with the goal of completely capturing the city of Stalingrad. In front of the front of the 64th and 57th armies, the enemy is bringing up new divisions and regrouping his troops to consolidate the battle formations of the defense.

2. The troops of the Stalingrad Front, in cooperation with the troops of the Southwestern and Don Fronts, launch a decisive offensive, defeat the Stalingrad grouping of the enemy and reach the Don River.



3. The 62nd Army firmly holds the eastern part of Stalingrad, and by breaking through the enemy front, the troops of the 57th and 51st Armies go on the offensive in order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing units from the army front and liberate the city of Stalingrad. You will be supported by an artillery group consisting of the 123rd Artillery Regiment, the 1108th Anti-tank Artillery Regiment, the 5th Guards Rocket Mortar Regiment (BM "Katyusha"), the 400th Separate Artillery Battalion (High Power), 3/125 mortar regiment and the 19th, 51st, 83rd, 89th, 92nd guards mortar regiments.

4. 64th Army. Composition - 7th Infantry Corps (93rd, 96th, 97th Infantry Brigades), 66th, 154th Marine Brigades, 29th, 204th, 157th, 38th Infantry Divisions, consolidated cadet

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regiment, 118th fortified area, 13th, 56th tank brigades. Strongly defending on the right flank, strike with the left flank in the direction of Gavrilovka, Varvarovka and by the end of the first day of the offensive reach the Yagodnoye-Nariman line. In the future, go to the Elkhi-Varvarovka front. The border on the left is Krasnoar Meysk, Ivanovka, Nariman, Gavrilovka, Varvarovka.

5. 57th Army. Composition - 169th, 422nd infantry divisions, 15th guards infantry division, 143rd rifle brigade, 13th mechanized corps (17th, 61st, 62nd motorized brigades), 235th, 90th tank brigades, 177, 45th separate machine-gun artillery battalions, 1159, 1104, 1111th artillery regiments, two anti-tank regiments, 70th guards artillery regiment, 498th howitzer-artillery regiment, 140th mortar regiment, 4th, 18th guards mortar regiments of rocket artillery, 516th, 536th separate guards divisions of rocket mortars. Break through the enemy defense front in the Khara-Usun-Tornovaya gully sector and ensure the entry of the 13th mechanized corps into the breakthrough in this sector. By the end of the day, with the right wing, reach the line Andreevka - Tonenkaya gully - Shosha gully - height 94.2. The center of the army from the line of height 108.2 is the Tornovaya beam and the left flank from the line of the southern part of Lake Sarpa, Lake Tsatsa to deliver a counterattack in the direction of the Kamennaya beam and, having destroyed parts of the 2nd Infantry Division (Romanian), clear the area occupied by them. The 13th mechanized corps, developing a breakthrough in the direction of Blinnikov, Vypasnaya, by the end of the first day, capture Nariman, Gavrilovka, Varvarovka, Tsybenko, Kravtsov, Rakotino, Bereslavsky, having one brigade in the area of Trudposelok No. 3. Later, after the change of parts of the corps by infantry, go to the front Sandy Quarry - Karpovka station and firmly defend the line Varvarovka - Karpovskaya station. Border on the left: Lake Tsatsa, northern part of Lake Barmantsak, Koshary, Buzinovka, Karpovskaya station.

6. 51st Army. Composition - 126th, 302nd, 91st infantry

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divisions, 76th fortified area, 4th mechanized corps, 4th cavalry corps, 38th motorized brigade, 154th tank brigade, 1168th, 1105th artillery regiments, 85th guards artillery regiment, 1246th, 149th anti-tank regiments, 125th mortar regiment, 80th, 90th guards mortar regiments of rocket artillery, 66th, 503rd separate guards rocket artillery battalions. While firmly defending on the left wing, break through the enemy's defense front in the sector southern part of Lake Tsatsa - northern part of Lake Barmantsak with the right wing and destroy the 1st, 18th infantry divisions (Romanian), ensure the introduction of the 4th mechanized and 4th Cavalry Corps on the entire breakthrough front. The immediate task for the infantry of the shock group is to reach the Kosh front - height 87.0. In the future, reach the line height 87.0 - the western bank of the river Middle Lasta and with one infantry division to ensure the development of the offensive from the south by reaching the line height 122.0 - the collective farm named after. Kirov.

The 4th mechanized corps (36th, 59th, 60th naval brigades, 55th, 158th separate tank regiments), developing a breakthrough in the direction of Plodovitoe, Zeta, by the end of the first day, go out with the main forces in Zeta region. By the end of the second day of the offensive, reach the Karpovka-Soviet line and defend it firmly. Place one brigade and two tank regiments in the Sredne-Tsa Ritsynsky area, sending an advanced detachment to capture and hold Lyapichev. Enter the 4th Cavalry Corps into the breakthrough of the 4th Mechanized Corps with the infantry reaching the line height 87.0 - Zakharov. In the event of a slowdown in the movement of the infantry, without waiting for the infantry, he himself completes the breakthrough and ensures himself the passage through the remaining centers of the enemy's defenses.

The 4th cavalry corps (61st, 84th cavalry divisions, 149th anti-tank regiment) should be introduced into the gap at nightfall on the first day in the direction of Semkin - height 87.0 - Abganerovo station. By the morning of the second day, go to the Abganerovo station, where to ensure the operation from the southwest.

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7. 28th Army. Firmly defending the Astrakhan bypass, a strike group consisting of the 34th Guards Infantry Division, the 152nd Infantry Brigade, the 899th Infantry Regiment (248th Infantry Division), the 6th Guards Tank Brigade, the 76th Guards Mortar Regiment

beat the German 16th motorized division and capture Holhuta, Utta, Yashkul. In the future, capture the city of Elista and ensure the defeat of the Stalingrad grouping of the enemy.

8. Artillery - to ensure the penetration of the enemy defenses by tanks and infantry, creating a density of fire per kilometer of the breakthrough front: for the 57th Army at least 40 guns, for the 51st Army at least 50 guns. With the introduction of mobile groups of the army into the breakthrough, provide them with fire along the entire length of the front.

9. The 8th Air Army to suppress the fire system and destroy the enemy's defensive structures to the entire depth of the breakthrough in the sectors of the 57th and 51st armies. Cover the mobile army groups in the starting position and in the breakthrough with successive bombing strikes against the enemy defenses. In the future, be ready to act on the call of the 13th and 4th mechanized corps and the 4th cavalry corps.

The day of the transition to the offensive will be handed over by special order.

Military political department of the front - Raigorod

Commander of the Stalingrad Front

N. Khrushchev

Member of the Military Council of the front, Colonel-General Eremenko

Front Chief of Staff

Major General Varennikov

December 8, Tuesday

From the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the formation of the 5th shock army as part of the Stalingrad Front and its tasks:

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"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

1. From December 9, 1942, form the 5th shock army as part of the Stalingrad Front, including the 4th Guards Rifle Division, 258, 300, 315, 87th Rifle Divisions, 4th Mechanized Corps, 7- th and 23rd tank corps and 3rd guards cavalry-

sky corps.

2. Establish a dividing line between the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts: Staro-Masimovsky - Tormosin - Apanaskino - all inclusive for the Stalingrad Front. Establish a dividing line between the 5th shock and 51st armies: for the 5th shock army. - Ivanovka (east of Gromoslavka) - claim. Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya and further along the Don River to Konstantinovskaya.

December 9, Wednesday

In order to build up forces on the outer front of the encirclement of the German fascist group, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command formed and transferred to the Stalingrad Front the 5th shock army under the command of Lieutenant General M. M. Popov. The 51st Army received reinforcements.

December 10, Thursday |

At the suggestion of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, Colonel General N. N. Voronov, due to the incompleteness of the concentration of troops, the start of Operation Saturn was postponed to December 16.

December 11, Friday

Directive of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command A. M. Vasilevsky on the conduct of the operation "Ring":

"1. Operation "Ring" is carried out in two stages.

2. The first stage - exit to the Basargino - Voro area

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renovate and liquidate the western and southern groups of the enemy.

3. The second stage is a general assault on all both fronts to eliminate the bulk of the enemy troops to the west and northwest of Stalingrad.

4. The operation of the first stage should be started no later than the date set during the telephone conversation between Vasilev and Mikhailov.

5. The operation of the first stage must be completed no later than December 23rd."

December 12, Saturday

In the morning, 2 tank divisions of the Nazi troops from the Don Army Groups under the command of G. Goth launched an offensive. The Nazis delivered a powerful tank strike from Kotelnikov on a narrow front along the Tikhoretsk-Stalingrad railway in the defense zone of the 51st Army under the command of Major General N.I. Trufnov. E. Manstein planned a connection with the army of F. Paulus southwest of Tundutovo. Using superiority in people and artillery by 2 times, and in tanks by more than 6 times, the Nazis broke through the defenses of the Stalingrad Front at the Kurmoyarsky substation, and by the end of the day the tank units of the Nazis reached the beret of the river. Aksai and in the area north of Nebykovo. The command of the Stalingrad Front sent the 235th Flamethrower Tank Brigade and the 87th Rifle Division to help the 51st Army.

December 13, Sunday

At dawn, the troops of E. Manstein resumed their offensive. Massed tank strikes with the support of aviation, the Nazis significantly expanded the front of the breakthrough. In the battle against enemy troops, the Stalingrad Front introduced the 13th mechanized corps and 30 attack aircraft of the 8th air army. But it was not possible to stop the furious onslaught of the Nazis. By the end of the day, G. Goth's tank divisions came out kr. Aksay, captured two bridgeheads on the northwestern bank of the river and captured x. Verkhne-Kumsky.

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December 14, Monday

From the order of the commander of the troops of the South-Western Front to the commander of the 1st Guards Army on the timing of the start of the offensive operation in the Bogucharsko-Millerov direction (Operation Little Saturn): attacks - 9.30, duration of artillery preparation - 1.30. The deadline is final and cannot be postponed in any case. Ensure the full READINESS OF THE TROOPS.

December 15, Tuesday

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command entrusted the Chief of the General Staff - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command A.M. Vasilevsky with the leadership of operations to repulse and defeat the Nazi Army Group "Don" Manstein.

December 16, Wednesday

Rifle divisions were transferred to the Stalingrad direction: 160th (Colonel M.P. Seryugin), 172nd (Colonel G.S. Sorokin), 350th (Major General A.P. Gritsenko), 267th (Colonel A. K. Kudryashov, from 12/18/42 - Colonel V. A. Gerasimov); divisions: 8th Artillery (Major General of Artillery P.M. Rozhanovich), 202nd Bomber Aviation (Colonel S.I. Nechiporenko), 290th Assault Aviation (Colonel P.I. Mironenko).

December 17, Thursday

From the combat report of the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front to the People's Commissar of Defense I.V. Stalin about the situation in the front line and the transition to the offensive in the Bogucharsko-Millerovsky direction (Operation "Small Saturn"): "... Combat operations continue at night to complete tasks day, clearing mines and making passages for tank corps.

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Combat report of the commander of the troops of the Stalingrad Front No. 0019 / op to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Ob situation in the Stalingrad region and in the Kotelnikovsky direction

December 17, 1942

1. On December 17, 1942, the troops of the front fought stubborn battles with the advancing Kotelnikovskaya enemy grouping in the Generalovskiy, Novoakskiy, Popova beam, Neklinskaya beam, Kruglyakov section. On the other fronts of the armies, the troops improved their positions, strengthened their defenses, and conducted active ground reconnaissance.

2. The aviation of the front delivered strikes against the advancing enemy tank grouping, and also destroyed its manpower and equipment in the areas of Verkhne-Yablochny, Art. Gremyach, Nebykovo, Samokhin, Gumrak, New Horn Chik, Art. Vorontsovo and on the railway section Dubovskoye, Kotel Nikovo, making a total of 576 sorties. Losses - 12 aircraft. Enemy aircraft affected the combat formations of the 51st Army and transported cargo to the area of their encircled troops, making about 300 self-summer sorties.

3. The enemy was destroyed on the day of December 17, 1942: soldiers and officers - 1500 people, tanks - 40, guns - 17, vehicles - 63, bunkers and dugouts - 28, machine guns - 14, aircraft - 26, of which transport - 12.

Decided: 1. By the forces of the 2nd Guards. army to defeat the Kotelnikovskaya enemy grouping on the outskirts of the outer Stalingrad bypass and reach the river. Ak sai. 2nd Guards army to subordinate the 4th Cavalry Corps, the 4th MKI to the 63rd Rifle Division. In order to strengthen the defense on the Stalingrad bypass, by the morning of December 18, 1942, withdraw the 98th Rifle Division to the line of Nizhne-Kumsky, Gromoslavka, 3rd Guards. sd - to the line Ivanovka, Kapkinka.

2. 51st Army to hold the occupied line along the river. Ak sai, with the right wing in the Kruglyakov area, to assist in the defeat of the enemy and the exit of the 2nd Guards. the army of the people Aksai.

3. Firmly block the rest of the armies of the front

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encircled enemy grouping, prevent its breakthrough to the south and prepare for an offensive in the Nizhne-Chirskaya area by the forces of the 5th shock army.

Eremenko

Khrushchev Varennikov

December 18, Friday

From the report of Colonel-General A.M. Vasilevsky to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation on the fronts of the Stalingrad direction and the proposal for a plan for the further use of the 5th shock army:

"By the morning of December 18, on the fronts of the Stalingrad direction, they had the following situation: On the Aksay River in the Novoaksaysky - Shestakov - Verkhne-Kumsky area, for the fifth day, the Volsky corps, reinforced by a tank brigade and two separate regiments of the Stalingrad Front, the 13th mechanized corps and the 20th fighter the anti-tank brigade, reinforced by units of the 87th rifle division, is engaged in a stubborn and successful battle with the 6th and 23rd tank divisions and one enemy infantry and motorized division, which are trying to break through to the north to the encircled Stalingrad grouping. Attempts by the enemy in the second half of December 17... on a narrow front... to break through to Gromoslavka were repulsed with heavy losses for him.

Just returned from Volsky comrade. Fedorenko reported that the enemy, as a result of attacks, again left several dozen tanks knocked out in the Verkhne-Kumsky region. By the end of December 17, Volsky had 135 tanks. The hull works great. On December 17, the 13th mechanized corps pushed the enemy back along the river. Myshkov and further on

Abganerovo (the outer contour of the former Stalingrad fortified area).  
The 300th, 98th, 3rd Guards, and partly the 87th and 38th Rifle Divisions have been deployed ... All of these units are ready to take on the enemy's blow from the south, but at the moment there is no contact with the enemy

have."

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From the report of A. M. Vasilevsky to the Supreme Commander of December 18, 1942.

"I ask you to approve the following plan for further planning and action by Yakovlev.

On the night of the 21st and 21st, deploy the Yakovlev Guards Rifle Corps along the Myshkova River on the Niyashe-Kumsky-Kapkinsky front and the 2nd Guards Mech Corps to concentrate in the Nereguzny, Aksai, Shelestov area and from Ugra 22.KhP go to active actions. 22. The HI Guards rifle corps, inflicting the main blow in the direction of Gromoslavka, Shestakov and further along the railway to Kotelnikovo, together with Volsky's corps, will have to finally defeat the enemy in the Verkhne-Kumsky region, clear the northern bank of the Aksai River and exit to the southern bank the Aksai River to secure it. The 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps from the Aksai region, with actions along the flank and rear of the enemy through Darganov, by the evening of 22.KhI will, having captured Kotelnikovo with a strong forward detachment, with the main forces go to the Pimen-Cherni, Thundering Chai region and thereby firmly sit down to the rear of the enemy grouping operating north of Kotelnikovo.

23.HI - liquidation of the enemy north-east of Kotelnikovo, with a strong barrier from the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps towards Dubovskoye and with the exit of the Guards Rifle Corps towards the evening on the Verkhne-Yablochny-Pimen-Cherni-Darganov line.

24.HI - exit of the guards rifle corps to the line Mayorsky - Kotelnikovo - Transverse with the release of the 2nd guards mechanized corps and the Volsky corps to the Sal River, a saddle railway. Ensuring the indicated actions of Yakovlev from the east is to be entrusted to Trufanov's army consisting of the 38th, 302nd, 126th and 91st rifle divisions, 2 tank brigades, and later Shapkin's cavalry corps, which in the coming days began to enter the area Prolific. Popov to oblige 20.HP to capture Nizhne-Chirskaya with a strike from the north-west and further joint actions with Romanenko in

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board on Tormosin by the evening of 24.HP go to the river



Tsymla ... ".

Notes:

1. Yakovlev - R. Ya. Malinovsky.

2. Corps Shapkin - 4th Cavalry Corps of the Stalingrad Front.

(TsAMO. F. 48-A, op. 2294, d. 1, l. 47-51.)

December 19, Saturday

In a fierce battle near the Verkhne-Kumsky farm, Lieutenant Colonel Azi Aslanov especially distinguished himself. The brave commander kept opening the top hatch in order to better see the battlefield and turn the tanks to where a new enemy tank column was moving towards our infantry. He did not stop leading the battle for a minute, setting an example of courage and stamina.

December 20, Sunday

The guards fought hard and bloody battles against the advancing Nazi troops, the battles did not stop for a minute, the battle went on for every inch of our land. Here the outcome of the Battle of Stalingrad was decided. The guardsmen withstood, the furious onslaught of the Nazis was repulsed, at this line, 35-40 km from the encircled group of F. Paulus, on December 22, the offensive of E. Manstein's troops was stopped.

Combat Report of the Commander of the Stalingrad Front No. 00199/  
op to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the progress of the  
defensive battle at the turn of the Myshkov River.

December 20, 1942

[1. On December 20, 1942, the troops of the front fought stubborn battles with the advancing enemy tank grouping in the amount of over 250 tanks and infantry units at the line of Verkhne-Rubezhny, the southern outskirts of Nizhne-Kumsky, and the southern outskirts of Vasilievka. On the site of the 51st Army, the troops repelled the attacks of enemy tanks and infantry in the areas of Kruglyakov and Zhutov-2. In other sectors of the front

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The mission troops repulsed small enemy attacks, conducted combat reconnaissance and strengthened their defenses.

2. Kotelnikovskaya enemy grouping consisting of the 6th, 23rd and 17th TD (17th TD operates on the eastern bank of the Don River, its presence was established by testimony

captured by the 27th artillery regiment of the 17th TD) during the day tried to break through the defense front of the 2nd Guards. army, inflicting the main blow on the front Nizhne-Kumsky, Vasilyevka. In the region of Nizhne-Kumsky and Vasilyevka, the enemy broke into these points, but counterattacks from units of the 98th Rifle Division and the 3rd Guards. The SD was knocked out, losing about 45 tanks. In the Kruglyakov area, the enemy, with a strength of up to 35 tanks, attacked the 13th Tank Corps, but, having lost 7 tanks, retreated to its original position. Frequent attacks by enemy infantry and tanks on Kanukovo were repulsed. On the site of the 5th Shock Army, according to its headquarters, the enemy's 11th TD is concentrated. The Stalingrad grouping of the enemy is preparing to deliver a counter strike in the southern and southwestern directions (it was established by the testimony of the prisoners that the troops were reinforced in the Karpovka-Kravtsov sector). In the area times. Prudboy and Sary Rogachik repulsed two enemy infantry attacks, each with a strength of up to a company.

3. The 2nd Guards Army, having repulsed the persistent attacks of enemy tanks and infantry near Nizhne-Kumsky and Vasilyevka, continues to wage stubborn battles on the southern outskirts of these points. The enemy continues to move tanks and motorized infantry into these sectors. 7th TC on the march to the area of beams north and northeast of Shabalinsky Chernomorov. The 2nd Guards MK is concentrated in the Yeri Ko-Krepinsky area, the temporary storage warehouse Krep. The 33rd Guards Rifle Division is concentrated in the area of Novo-Petrovsky, Bratsky, the 56th Tank Brigade is concentrated in the area of the Yurkin temporary storage warehouse (2 km north of the Abganerovo station).

4. Frontal aviation destroyed enemy tanks and motorized infantry in front of the front of the 2nd Guards Army, railway echelons in the area of Kotelnikovo station, Zhutovo station and enemy aircraft. A total of 516 sorties were made, 256 of them at night. Losses - 2 aircraft. Enemy aircraft bombed the battle formations of the troops of the 2nd Guards. ar

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mission, transported cargo to the encircled troops, made about 600 sorties, of which about 300 were transport sorties.

5. On the day of December 20, 1942, soldiers and officers were destroyed - about 1500 people, tanks - about 60, aircraft - 35, of which transport - 27, guns - 21, mortars - 14, bunkers - 20, dugouts - 43, machine guns - 13, vehicles - 64.

6. During December 21, 1942, the troops of the front will hold the occupied lines and destroy the enemy on the approaches to the defense, preventing the enemy's Kotelnikovsky grouping from breaking through to the north and the encircled grouping to the south.

Eremenko

Khrushchev Varennikov

(TsAMO RF. F. 220, op. 451, d. 42a.)

December 21, Monday

From the operational summary of the Wehrmacht high command:  
"During the offensive of the 57th Panzer Corps, it was only possible to move forward a little. A strong onslaught of the enemy on the bridgehead near Nizhne-Kumsky, which is held by the 17th Panzer Division. On the front of the 3rd Romanian army, the enemy continues a strong onslaught in the Chira bend ...".

December 22, Tuesday

Commander of the Stalingrad Front

12/22/42.

I am reporting the decision on the offensive operation of the 2nd Guards Army to destroy the Aksai-Kotelnikov group of Germans.

1. Begin the operation on the morning of December 25, with the 2nd Guards Army in the following operational formation:

1st Guards sk consisting of 24, 98 and 33 rifle divisions, 1095 caps / 12 howitzer guns 152 mm /, 648 dads / 18 howitzer guns 152 mm / t 48 gmp / 17 M-13 installations /, the main blow is delivered from the front by Chernomor, Gromoslavka and by the end of the first day

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Ieniya takes possession of the border Generalovsky, Vodyansky. By the end of the second for the offensive, the Nizhne-Yablochny, Verkhne-Yablochny line takes possession. In the future, he steps on the line Mayorsky, Kotelnikovo.

Border on the right: Budyonny, Chernomorov, Generalovsky, Sazonov.

The border on the left: Rubezhny, the Krep state farm, Ivanovka, Zalivsky, Verkhne-Yablochny.

13 Guards. sk. As part of the 3rd, 49th and 387th rifle divisions, 506 cap / 12 howitzer guns 152 mm /, 1100 and 1101 dads / 12 122 mm guns each /, 1250 iptap / 15 45 mm anti-tank guns /, 23rd GMP / 20 M-13 installations /, two corps tank regiments. The main blow is dealt on the front by Vasilievka, Birzovaya, and by the end of the first day, the Neklinskaya and Zarya gully takes possession of the border. By the end of the second day, mastering

there is a beam Yablochnaya, Chilekovo. In the future, he advances on Kotelnikovo, Pimen-Cherni.

Left border: Zetas, Tebektenanovo, Kruglyakov, Chi  
easy.

2nd Guards MK with the 6th MK make up a shock tank group. By the end of December 24, they are brought to the Aksai, Peregruzny, Shelestov area. From the morning of 25.12 they are advancing: 2nd Guards. MK in the direction of Samokhin, Chilekovo and mastering Chilekovo on the first day. From there they interact on the second day of the attack on the rear of the enemy to destroy him in the area of Shestakov, Klykov.

The 6th MK from the Peregruzny area advances from the morning of December 25 in the direction of Zhutov-2, Darganov and takes Gremyachaya, Pimen-Cherni by the end of the first day. On the second day of the offensive, the main forces captured Kotelnikovo, and the advanced detachments of Dubovskoye, having reconnaissance, Andreevskaya, Gusarov, Shabalin ...

Have the 7th shopping mall in the second echelon of the army and use it according to the situation. It is likely that he will have to take part in the battle on the first day to destroy the enemy together with the 13th Guards Rifle Corps and the 51st A group in the Vasilievka, Shestakov area ...

4. Do not carry out artillery preparation, but launch an attack simultaneously with a 15-minute fire raid

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all art. means, as well as infantry means, including heavy machine guns. I report the above decision for your approval.

denie.  
Commander of the 2nd  
Guards. A Lieutenant General Malinovsky  
Member of the Military Council  
Major General Larin Chief  
of Staff of the 2nd Guards. A Biryuzov

By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the medal "For the Defense of Stalingrad" was established.

December 23, Wednesday

Extract from the directive of the commander of the Stalingrad Front.

"The enemy is carrying out a strike from the Kotelnikovo area in order to free the encircled. In his first eshe-

The enemy's 17th and 23rd tank divisions are advancing, their flanks are backed by the infantry and cavalry divisions. At least two motorized divisions follow in the second echelon. All these forces are part of the 4th Panzer Army, which, according to intelligence, in one or two days should deliver the final blow in order to link up with the encircled. On Hitler's orders, they must unite by December 25, that is, by Christmas. The main direction of the enemy's strike Crepe, Zeta.

According to the original plan, it was supposed to carry out a breakthrough on December 12-20, but thanks to the heroic actions of the troops of the front, the most stubborn nine-day battles did not bring the desired success to the fascist German troops. Both sides suffered heavy losses.

As a result, the time needed to concentrate the 2nd Guards Army was gained.

The task of the army, on the orders of the Headquarters, is the final defeat of the enemy's Kotelnikovskaya grouping. This is also the only condition for the defeat of all Nazi troops in the Stalingrad region.

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In fulfillment of this plan, I decide: without wasting time, so as not to give the enemy a respite, on December 24, with the forces of four corps, to carry out a blow on the left flank of the enemy, which he was forced to substitute for us as a result of the actions of the 51st Army. The Kotelnikovskaya group of fascist German troops must be destroyed in two stages:

1st stage - forces of the 2nd Guards Army, in cooperation with the right flank of the 51st Army, to press the enemy to the Aksai River, destroy the enemy tank divisions and successfully cross the river;

2nd stage - strike on Kotelnikovo; the main strike from the right, covering Kotelnikovo from the west and south-west.

The 51st Army delivers a partial auxiliary attack on Kotelnikovo from the east, pushing its own, albeit weak, mechanized corps deep into the Dubovskoye-Zimovniki communication line.

I ORDER:

The 2nd Guards Army to launch an offensive at 10 o'clock on December 24 with the immediate task of destroying the 17th and 23rd enemy tank divisions in the area of Kapkinsky, Gromoslavka, Verkhne-Kumsky, Kruglyakov; in the future, the main blow with the right flank on Kotelnikovo.

At the first stage, the most powerful blow is delivered by the 1st

guards rifle, 7th tank and 2nd mechanized corps - from the Shabalinsky, Gromoslavka front, covering the enemy from the west to Biryukov. The operation from the west on the line from Verkhne-Rubezhnoye to the Aksai River is provided by the 300th Rifle Division.

The 13th Guards Rifle Corps strikes from the front (excl.) Gromoslavka, Kapinsky on Shestakov and further along the railway to Kotelnikovo.

The 6th Mechanized Corps should continue to concentrate at an accelerated pace in the area of Zeta and be ready for a counterattack by the end of December 24th.

From the report of the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the situation of the front's mobile formations on December 22-23, 1942:

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"I report specifically about the situation of the tank and mechanized corps:

The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps captured and reached the Milyutinskaya line by 0600 on 12/23/42.

The 25th Panzer Corps reached Pervomaiskoye at 8:00 22:12 with its main forces, routed the Rumanian 11th Infantry Division along the way, and captured the commander of this division. In the future, the corps acts on Morozovsky.

By 24:00 on 22:12, the 24th Panzer Corps reached Bolyshinka and fought for Ilyinka.

The 18th Panzer Corps with the main forces in Degtevo. Prior to this, the corps took part in the defeat of the encircled enemy grouping in the area of Zhuravka, Verkhnya KOVSKY.

The 17th Panzer Corps, smashing the enemy along the way, captured Voloshino by the end of December 22 ... ".

December 24, Thursday

From the combat report of the Chief of Staff of the Stalingrad Front to the Supreme Commander

"On December 24, the troops of the front went on the offensive in the general direction of Kotelnikovo and, overcoming enemy resistance, advanced 4-16 km. On the site of the 62nd Army in the area of the Krasny Oktyabr plant, the enemy was surrounded. In other directions, the troops continued to strengthen their defenses... The Kotelnikovskaya tank grouping of the enemy... is stubbornly

resistance to the advancing troops of the 2nd Guards [Ardean] Army and the 51st Army ... The enemy puts up especially stubborn resistance at the turn of heights south of Upper Kumsky ... The enemy did not show activity in the rest of the front.

Combat order of the headquarters of the 2nd Guards Army

No. 12 -

December 24, 1942 Verkhne-Tsaritsynskaya

The enemy units 17, bi 23 td concentrated to strike in the general direction at st. Abganerovo, having

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the main grouping consisting of 17 and 6 TD in the area of Salt, Dedova, Raspopinskaya and covering in providing its left flank in the area of Verkh. Kumsky.

On the right, 300th Rifle Division attacks in the general direction of Shabali, a sheep farm, and captures the Verkh line. Rubizhny, Podstepinsky with the task of providing the 2nd Guards A.

On the left, units of the 51st A are attacking in the direction of Gnilo-Aksaysky, 160.4 at height 157.0.

2nd Guards A with the main blow in the direction of Gromoslavka, the Neklinskaya beam destroys the main enemy grouping in the area of the Rassypnaya beam, height. 146.9, high. 157.0.

1 Guards sk, 648 dads, 48 gmp, a group of tanks Aslanov and Burdov at 8.00 24.12. 42 attacks the opposing enemy on the Chernomorov, Gromoslavka front with the next task at 12.00 to reach the Verkh.Kumsky, Zagotskot, high. 121.8. The next task is to master Ver.Kumsky, vys. 143.7, 147.0, 130.6, capturing the crossings at Novo-Aksaysky, Dorofeevskaya, Zalivsky with advanced units. 33 Guards. SD - to occupy the line of defense of Chernomorov, Gromoslavka by 09.00 on 24.12.42.

The 13th Guards SKS 1250 Iptap, 4 GMP, 1100 and 1101 Popes attacked the enemy at the front / claim / Gromoslavka, Kapkinka with two regiments from 9.00 from the line of Ivanovka, a mill. The center and left flank attacks from 13.00. The next task is the line of the beam 5 km south. Ivanovka, Paris Commune. In the future - e.g. 1.7, meadow, elev. 1.5, high 157.0. Capture the crossings at the points of Klykov, Shestakov.

387 sd - firmly hold the occupied line.

7 shopping mall - prepare crossings in the Nizh area by the morning. Kumsky. Starting line for the attack Lower. Kumsky, / lawsuit / Gromoslavka. By 12.00 24.12.42, attack in mutual

interaction with | guards ski 2nd Guards microns of the enemy in the general direction of high. 123.3, Neklinskaya gully, Krutaya gully with the next task at 13.00 to capture the Zagotskot line, vys. 121.3, including the highway. In the future, destroy the enemy in the meadow area, vys. 146.9, wide beam. Prevent the enemy from withdrawing to the southwest. The collection area is the Neklinskaya beam.

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2 Guards MK from 435 lptap to complete the preparation of crossings in the Gromoslavka and Ivanovka area by dawn, take the starting line for an attack on the Gromoslavka, Ivanovka front. At 12.00 24.12 attack the enemy in cooperation with units of the 13th Guards. ski 7 tk.

6 MK - readiness for hostilities at 8.00 24.12. Keep in mind counterattacks on the enemy units that have broken through in the direction of the Bolshaya Tatarskaya beam, Art. Abganerovo, with the main task of preventing the enemy from breaking through in the northern and northeastern directions. Be ready for offensive operations from the morning of 15.12.

Artillery - during the period of preparation of the attack, a 10-minute fire raid - with the task of suppressing fire weapons and disrupting the enemy's fire system. During the battle in depth, prevent flank counterattacks against the enemy. Ammunition consumption - 1/2 BC on the day of the battle.

Air defense - to cover the initial position of the strike group of the army in the Nizh. Kumsky, Gromoslavka, Ivanovka and further cover the Zagotskot area, Neklinskaya beam, height. 104.5.

Control signals - exit to the line Upper. Kumsky, Zagotskot, vys. 121.3, Paris Commune - radio signal "DON", "999".

Exit to the second line Klykov, Neklinskaya beam, meadow, height. 104.5 - "VOLGA", "555".

Completed the task - "CHANNEL," 777 ".

KP - Verkhnee-Tsaritsynsky, NP - sovkh. Krep. Collection item.  
- Sovh. Krep.

Commander 2 Malinovsky  
Member of the Military Council Aleksandrov  
Chief of Staff Biryuzov

December 25, Friday

From the order of the commander of the troops of the Southwestern Front:



"Lelyushenko's aviation during the day observed the enemy's retreat from Milyutinskaya in the direction of Chernyshkovsky and the enemy's approach from the Tormosin area ... The possibility of an enemy strike is not ruled out

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on your right flank from Oblivskaya. I order: from 24.00 25.12 from 24.00 25.12 the 346th from the rifle] division to reassign the 5th TA [Tank Army] ... [and establish a new dividing line] between the 3rd Guards and 5th Tank Armies: Leontievsky - 2 th farm of state farm No. 18 - Zolotovskiy - Verbochka ... Tov. Romanenko to take measures to repulse a possible counterattack by the enemy.

December 26, Saturday

From the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command to the commander of the troops of the Stalingrad and South-Western fronts:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders: the 5th shock army ... from 12 o'clock on December 26, 1942, be transferred from the Stalingrad Front to the troops of the Southwestern Front. Appoint Lieutenant General Popov M.M. as Deputy Commander of the Southwestern Front for directing the actions of the 5th Tank and 5th Shock Armies, relieving him of the post of Commander of the 5th Shock Army and Deputy Commander of the Stalingrad Front. Appoint Lieutenant General V. D. Tsvetaev as commander of the troops of the 5th shock army ... Include the 23rd tank corps in the 5th tank army. Consider the main task of the Southwestern Front on its left flank to be the elimination of the enemy in the area south of Surovikino and in the Chernyshkovsky area, and the capture of the Tormosin-Oblivskaya-Chernyshkovsky area. Establish a dividing line between the Stalingrad and Southwestern fronts from Kalach (Stalingrad) to the south along the Don River.

December 27, Sunday

PLAN TO DESTROY THE ENEMY ENCOUNTERED  
STALINGRAD GROUP

December 27, 1942

Submitting the plan for defeating the encircled Stalingrad grouping of the enemy for your approval, I report:

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1. The main blow is delivered by the forces of the Don Front - fourteen rifle divisions, eight tank regiments, thirty-two artillery regiments, nine guards. Minpol kov - from the front high. 131.7, h. 122.9 in the general direction to Baburkin, Gonchar's farm, Stalingradsky, pos. Red October.

The purpose of the strike is to split the encircled group from west to east and consistently destroy it piece by piece.

Auxiliary strike is applied:

a) the 66th Army with five divisions on the high front. 130.7, railway bend northwest of Orlovka, in the direction - rzd. Ancient shaft, x. New Hope.

6) The forces of the Stalingrad Front (four rifle divisions, three motorized rifle brigades, two mechanized brigades, twelve artillery regiments and four RS regiments) in the Popov, Rakotino sector, in the general direction - Kravtsov, high. 123.6, Art. Voroponovo.

2. The direction of the main blow is chosen based on the following considerations:

a) Delivering the main blow from west to east, we concentrate the main power of our strike on the main enemy forces located in the area of \u200b\u200bMarinovka, Zhir nokleevka, Malaya Rossoshka, svh. No. [, we dismember them and in the future we sequentially destroy the dismembered separate groups of the enemy.

6) On the front of the main strike, the troops are defending, which were partially defeated in the previous operation of the South-Western and Don fronts (76, 44, 376, 384 infantry division and 14 infantry division), among them 44 and 376 infantry divisions have recently given the largest number prisoners and defectors.

c) The defensive line occupied by the enemy in the western sector was prepared only after the withdrawal of his units from behind the Don, while the northern sector was prepared for defense within 4 months. In addition, the best German divisions are on the defensive in the northern sector, and there are many wrecked German and our tanks on the battlefield, which are used by the enemy as armored firing points.

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D) The nature of the terrain, cut by deep beams running from west to east, provides our tank units with freedom of maneuver in depth, while their actions will be limited if they strike from north to south.

e) An advantageous starting position that does not require a complex regrouping of troops.

3. The start of the operation depends on the arrival of reinforcements, reinforcements and ammunition to the Don Front. After the arrival of replenishment, I take three days to process it and put it into operation.

The approximate date for the start of operations is January 6, 1943.

The first stage of the operation is the destruction of the western part of the encircled grouping and reaching the x line. New Hope, h. Gonchar, vys. 155.0, Gerbil - two days.

The second stage - the destruction of the enemy in the Peschanka, Stalingrad, Gumrak area - two days.

The third stage is the final clearing (by part of the forces) of the entire area from individual defending enemy groups - three days.

In total, the operation is seven days.

4. After the end of the operation, the troops of the Don Front are withdrawn to the north of the Kalach (Stalingradsky) line, Marinovka, Karpovka, Pitomnik, pos. Red Oktyabr (all points for the Don Front). Troops of the Stalingrad Front - to the south of the indicated line.

Colonel General Voronov

(TsAMO RF. F. 16A, op. 1002, d. 1, l. 26-29. Original NIK.)

December 28, Monday

From Hitler's operational order: "Army Group Don ... is obliged to do everything to maintain the conditions for the liberation of the 6th Army. It can only then withdraw its formations to the west, if this is absolutely necessary, and only in the course of a continuous battle in order to inflict as many losses on the enemy as possible ...".

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December 29, Tuesday

The enemy, with the remnants of his defeated units and the troops that have withdrawn from the Kotelnikovo area, is trying to hold the Skasyrskaya, Morozovsky, Chernyshkovsky line in order to avoid encirclement by our troops east of the Seversky Donetsk River. In the Kotelnikovskiy direction, the enemy hurriedly retreats under the blows of our troops, leaving equipment and a large number of

body of corpses.

December 30, Wednesday

After the defeat of the Army Group "Don" under the command of Field Marshal E. Manstein, the Stalingrad Front was transformed into the Southern Front, having received the strategic task of advancing on Rostov.

December 31, Thursday

From the final combat report of the commander of the Stalingrad Front A. I. Eremenko to I. Stalin: "... The Nazis broke their necks near Stalingrad, they suffered a strategic defeat here. In the battles for Stalingrad, the 62nd and 64th armies especially distinguished themselves at the first stage of the battle, and their troops showed unprecedented perseverance in the struggle and devotion to our Motherland. These armies deserve to be awarded orders, converted to guards and given the name "Stalingrad" ... And their commanders, Lieutenant General Chuikov and Lieutenant General Shumilov, are worthy of being awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

Order of the commander of the troops of the Stalingrad front to the commanders of the 62nd, 64th, 57th, 2nd guards, 51st and 28th armies on the liquidation of the Stalingrad and the formation of the Southern fronts and related organizational measures

M 217/op.

December 31, 1942

1. Based on the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 170720 dated 12/30/42. Stalingrad fronts 1.1.43 liquidated and formed the Southern Front, as part of the 2nd Guards, 51st and 28th Armies.

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2. I was appointed commander of the troops of the Southern Front, Khrushchev N.S. was appointed a member of the Military Council. and Chuyanov A.S., chief of staff of the front - Major General Varennikov I.S.

3. The headquarters, front departments, rear units and institutions of the Stalingrad Front were transformed and transferred to the Southern Front.

4. 62, 64 and 57 armies from 1.1.43 to become subordinate to the Don Front, consisting of:

a) 62 ARMY:

13th, 39th Guards Rifle Divisions.

45, 95, 138, 234, 308 infantry divisions

92, 124, 149 separate rifle brigades

77, 78, 19, 80, 81 barrage detachments

156 fortified areas with 17, 348, 400, 416 separate machine-gun and artillery battalions.

4 separate battalion of anti-tank rifles

1103, 266, 397, 499 anti-tank artillery regiments

8 Guards separate radio division

14] mortar regiment

89th and 92nd Guards mortar regiments

23 separate air defense company

242 anti-aircraft artillery regiment of air defense

23, 73, 192 separate high-explosive flamethrower companies

171, 170 separate companies of knapsack flamethrowers

326, 327 army engineering battalions

6) 64 ARMY:

Office of the 7th Rifle Corps

93, 96, 97, 143 separate rifle brigades

36th Guards Rifle Division

157, 160, 204, 29 rifle divisions

38, 66, 154 naval infantry brigades

Consolidated cadet, regiment

82, 83, 84, 85, 86 barrage detachments

77 - fortified area with 43, 44, 145, 171, 349 separate machine gun and artillery battalions

118 fortified area with 19, 147, 161, 298, 171 separate machine gun and artillery battalions

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90 tank brigade

91st, 166th Tank Regiment

28 division of armored trains

186, 500 anti-tank artillery regiments

1104, 1111 cannon-artillery regiments

838 separate radio division

1st, 2nd, 3rd anti-tank rifle battalions

18 Guards mortar regiment and 18 heavy guards. mortar brigade

172 separate radio company,

22, 103 officer companies

1261 Air Defense Regiment

662 Air Defense Company

c) 57 ARMY

15 Guards. rifle division

422, 38 rifle divisions

145 Fortified area with 45, 166, 172, 177, 303 separate machine-gun and artillery battalions

254, 235 tank brigades

234 tank regiment

156 Motorized Rifle Brigade

502, 184, 565, 762 anti-tank artillery regiments

59, 1188, 1168 artillery regiments

Separate battalion of anti-tank rifles

40 mortar regiment (without division)

498th Guards Artillery Regiment

20 Fighter Brigade

625 separate anti-aircraft artillery battalion

726 Air Defense Regiment

12th Air Defense Company

24, 25, 76, 101, 105, 107 separate flamethrower companies

74, 75, 76, 132 army barrage detachments

175 engineering battalion

79 separate company of field water supply

23 light pontoon column

43, 65 light pontoon maintenance team  
columns

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5. The northern and southern borders of the former Stalingrad Front  
to be preserved and left behind the Southern Front. Eremenko

Khrushchev Varennikov

January 8, 1943

ULTIMATUM OF THE SOVIET COMMAND

TO THE COMMANDER OF THE GERMAN 6TH ARMY

TO COLONEL GENERAL PAULUS

The 6th German Army, formations of the 4th Panzer Army and the reinforcement units attached to them have been in complete encirclement since November 23, 1942. Parts of the Red Army surrounded this group of German troops in a tight ring. All hopes for the salvation of your troops by the advance of the German troops from the south and southwest were not justified. The German troops rushing to your aid have been defeated by the Red Army, and the remnants of these troops are retreating to Rostov. In connection with the successful, rapid advance of the Red Army, the German transport aviation, which is transporting you a starvation ration of food, ammunition and fuel, is forced to frequently change airfields and fly to the location of those surrounded from afar. In addition, German transport aviation suffers huge losses in aircraft and crews from Russian aviation. Her help to the encircled troops becomes unrealistic.

The position of your encircled troops is difficult. They experience hunger, sickness and cold. The harsh Russian winter is just beginning; severe frosts, cold winds and snowstorms are yet to come, and your soldiers are not provided with winter uniforms and are in difficult unsanitary conditions.

You, as the commander and all the officers of the encircled troops, understand very well that you have no real possibilities to break through the encirclement. Your position is hopeless, and further resistance

doesn't make any sense.

In the context of the hopeless situation that has developed for you

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In order to avoid needless bloodshed, we suggest that you accept the following terms of surrender:

- 1) All German encircled troops, led by you and your headquarters, stop resistance.
- 2) To you in an organized way to transfer to our disposal all the personnel, weapons, all military equipment and military equipment in good condition.

We guarantee life and safety to all officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers who have ceased resistance, and, after the end of the war, return to Germany or any country where prisoners of war wish.

We preserve military uniforms, insignia and orders, personal belongings, valuables for all personnel of the surrendered troops, and edged weapons for the highest officers.

All surrendered officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers will immediately be given normal food there. All the wounded, sick and frostbite will receive medical assistance.

Your answer is expected at 3:00 pm Moscow time on January 9, 1943, in writing through a representative personally appointed by you, who is to follow in a car with a white flag along the road junction Konny - Kotluban station.

Your representative will be met by trusted Russian commanders in area "B" - 0.5 km southeast of junction 564 at 15:00 on January 9, 1943.

If you reject our offer of surrender, we warn you that the troops of the Red Army and the Red Air Fleet will be forced to work until the encircled troops are destroyed, and you will be responsible for their destruction.

Representative of the Headquarters of the  
Supreme High Command of the Red Army Colonel  
General of Artillery Voronov Commander  
of the Don Front



Lieutenant General Rokossovsky

(TsAMO RF. F. 32, op. 11 306, d. 86, l. 316,322-324.)

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The composition and organization of the troops  
of the parties participating in the hostilities on the external front  
of the encirclement of the USSR

Stalingrad Front

It was formed on July 12, 1942 to organize defense in the Stalingrad direction as part of the 62nd, 63rd and 64th armies from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the 21st army and the 8th air army from the abolished Southwestern Front. The administration was formed on the basis of the administration of the Southwestern Front. Subsequently, at various times, the Stalingrad Front included the 28th, 38th, 57th, 51st, 66th, 24th, 1st and 2nd Guards, 5th Shock General Armies, 1st and 4th tank armies, 16th air army. The Volga military flotilla and the Stalingrad air defense corps area were operationally subordinate to him.

By July 17, the front took up defensive positions in a strip of more than 500 kilometers at the turn of the middle reaches of the Don and in its large bend from Kletskaya to Verkhne-Kurmoyarskaya. After the German fascist troops had broken through the Soviet front in the southwestern direction, the troops of the Stalingrad Front took upon themselves the blow of a strong enemy grouping (the Battle of Stalingrad 1942-1943). Due to the increased width of the defense zone (about 800 km), the Stalingrad Front was divided on August 7 into the Stalingrad (63rd, 21st and 62nd armies, 4th tank army, 16th air army) and the South Eastern front.

In the defensive battle near Stalingrad, the troops of the Stalingrad Front, in cooperation with the troops of the South-Eastern and Don Fronts, exhausted

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the enemy, held the city and created the prerequisites for the Soviet troops to go on the offensive. By the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of September 28, the Stalingrad Front was renamed the Don Front, and the South-Eastern Front - the Stalingrad as part of the 28th, 51st, 57th, 62nd, 64th combined arms armies and the 8th air army. Since December, it included the 5th Shock and 2nd Guards armies.

On November 20, the troops of the Stalingrad Front launched a counteroffensive and on November 23, in cooperation with the troops of the Southwestern Front, they surrounded the 330,000th group of Nazi troops near Stalingrad. From December 12 to 30, they carried out the Kotelnikovskaya operation of 1942, as a result of which they repelled an enemy attempt to release the Nazi troops surrounded near Stalingrad and defeated his Kotelnikovskaya group. On January 1, 1943, the Stalingrad Front was transformed into the Southern Front.

#### Commanders:

S. K. Timoshenko (July), Marshal of the Soviet Union;

V. N. Gordov (July - August), lieutenant general;

A. I. Eremenko (August - December), Regimental General NIK.

#### Member of the Military Council:

N. S. Khrushchev.

#### Chiefs of Staff:

P. I. Bodin (July), lieutenant general;

D. N. Nikishev (July - September), major general;

K. A. Kovalenko (September), major general;

G. F. Zakharov (September - October), major general;

I. S. Varennikov (October - December).

#### 2nd Guards Army

The 2nd Guards Army was deployed in accordance with the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of October 23, 1942 on the basis of the 1st Reserve Army. Formation and training were carried out in the rear of the country, in the regions of Tambov, Michurinsk and Mor Shansk. It included: 1st Guards Rifle Corps

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pus - 24th „ 33rd Guards and 98th Rifle Divisions (corps commander - guards Major General I. I. Mis san); 13th Guards Rifle Corps - 49th, 3rd Guards and 387th Rifle Divisions (corps commander - Guards Major General P. G. Chanchibadze); 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, deployed on the basis of the 22nd Guards Rifle Division (corps commander - Guards Major General K.V. Sviridov), in

stave 4, 5, 6th guards mechanized brigades.

Taking into account that the Stavka set a rather strict deadline for the completion of the formation of the army - November 25, combat training, staffing and cohesion of units and subunits were carried out at an accelerated pace.

Subsequently, a number of formations were included in the 2nd Guards Army.

Commanders:

Major General (since February 1943 - Lieutenant General) Kreizer Ya. G. (October - November 1942 and February - July 1943);

Lieutenant General Malinovsky R. Ya. (November 1942 - February 1943).

Chiefs of Staff:

Colonel Gretsov M.D. (October-December 1942);

Major General Biryuzov S. S. (December 1942 - April 1943)

1st Guards Rifle Corps

#### ORDER OF THE STAFF OF THE SUPREME HIGH COMMAND ON THE FORMATION OF THE 1st AND 2nd GUARDS RIFLE CORPS!

No. 00138 December 31, 1941

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

' Initially, the order began with the phrase: "Due to the fact that very often rifle battalions independently perform operational tasks in isolation from their regiments, as well as ... ", which is crossed out, in all likelihood, by I. Stalin.

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1. Form the 1st and 2nd Guards Rifle Corps! so that they obey the command of the front, and not the army.

2. Appoint as commanders of the guards rifle corps: commander of the 1st guards rifle corps - commander of the 7th guards rifle division, Colonel Gryaznov A.S.;

Commander of the 2nd Guards Rifle Corps

Colonel Lizyukov A.I.

3. Guards rifle corps to have the following composition:

1st Guards Rifle Corps: 7th Guards Rifle Division, 52nd, 14th, 15th Rifle and 74th Naval Brigades;

2nd Guards Rifle Corps: 8th Guards Rifle Division, 38th, 37th Rifle and 75th Marine Brigades and one Rifle Brigade on the orders of the Commander of the Western Front.

4. In addition to the composition of each guards rifle corps include:

a) three ski battalions - by order of the head of the Main Directorate for the formation and staffing of troops;

6) one tank brigade consisting of 10 KV tanks, 16 T-34 tanks and 20 T-60 tanks each - by order of the head of the GABTU;

c) one Guards mortar battalion, consisting of 12 installations each - by order of the commander of the mortar units;

d) one communications battalion each - by order of the head of the Main Directorate of Communications of the Red Army;

e) one supply battalion, consisting of an auto company - 150 vehicles and a coach company - 250 sledges (carts) each - by order of the chief of rear of the Red Army.

5. To change the existing states, in the 7th and 8th Guards Rifle Divisions.

1

After the words "rifle corps", the end of the phrase was written by I. Stalin in red pencil, instead of the deleted one "with direct subordination to the Headquarters of the Supreme Command Research Institute".

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In rifle divisions, to have in each: USV guns - 20, 122-mm howitzers - 12, anti-tank rifles - 144, PPSH - 875 \*, creating in each rifle regiment an additional one company of submachine gunners (100 ShPPSH \* per company).

To accept the Serdyuk rifle grenade for mandatory supply to the guards rifle corps, for which purpose at least 15 fighters should be specially trained in each company.

6. Set up points for the formation of corps administrations and the area of concentration of formations:

1st Guards Rifle Corps - Skhodnya;

2nd Guards Rifle Corps - Nakhbino.

The readiness of the guards rifle corps - January 10, 1942.

7. Heads of central departments of NCOs:

a) staff the formed directorates of the guards rifle corps according to the state 04/1;

6) form the required units and service institutions;

c) fully re-equip and provide with all the weapons and equipment laid down in the tables, the formations and units included in the guards rifle corps.

Deliver execution.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. STALIN  
VASILEVSKY

(f. 4, op. 11, case 62, sheets 499-500. Original.)

G-th tank corps

It was formed in August 1942 in Kalinin on the basis of the 3rd Guards Tank Brigade and on August 15, 1942, by the Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. No. 994165 was withdrawn to the front-line reserve of the Bryansk Front.

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Participated in the Battle of Stalingrad from August 26, 1942. On October 30, having suffered heavy losses, the corps was withdrawn from the front for replenishment and reorganization. The second time the 7th Tank Corps appeared near Stalingrad on December 7, 1942, as part of the 5th Shock Army, where it fought until December 31, 1942.

By order of the NPO of the USSR No. 413 of December 29, 1942, the 7th Tank Corps was transformed into the 3rd Guards Tank Corps for the courage and heroism of the personnel shown during the Battle of Stalingrad.

Body Composition:

Directorate of the tank corps

3rd Guards Tank Brigade

62nd tank brigade

87th tank brigade

7th motorized rifle brigade

Body parts:

7th automobile company for the supply of fuel and lubricants

114th field car repair base

177th Field Repair Base

2106th field cash desk of the State Bank

2nd Guards Mechanized Corps

Corps Commander Major General, from 06/07/1943 Lieutenant General K.V.

The corps began its formation by NPO Order No. 00220 dated October 22, 1942 on the basis of the 22nd Guards Rifle Division (1 formation, the former 363rd), withdrawn from the Bryansk Front as the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps. The completion date of the corps is November 25, 1942, deployment is the city of Morshansk. The tank units of the corps were formed from the 131st, 217th and 246th tank brigades.

As part of the army since December 15, 1942, but on October 23, 1942 by the Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

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No. 994276 Corps was included in the 2nd Guards Army.

From December to April 1944, the corps operated as part of the first Stalingrad, and then the Southern (4th Ukrainian) Front, and for a year only as part of the 2nd Guards Army, where it received a baptism of fire in repelling the blow of Manstein, who was marching on help Paul su. Then, after being in the reserve, he returned to the 2nd Ukrainian Front, where he acted until the end of the war, mainly as part of the 46th Army.

Body Composition:

Corps management

4th Guards Mechanized Brigade

18th Guards Tank Regiment

5th Guards Mechanized Brigade

19th Guards Tank Regiment

6th Guards Mechanized Brigade

20th Guards Tank Regiment

20th Separate Guards Tank Regiment (until May 1943)

21st Separate Guards Tank Regiment, in May 1943 reorganized into the 37th Guards Tank Brigade)

Guards Artillery Regiment

Separate Guards Anti-Tank Fighter DIVISION

Separate Guards Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment

Separate guards mortar division M-13

Command Battery of the Chief of Artillery

Separate Guards Machine Gun Battalion

Guards Training Battalion

Body parts:

76th Separate Guards Communications Battalion

55th Separate Guards Sapper Battalion

59th separate repair and restoration battalion in Kalinin on the basis of the 3rd Guards Tank Brigade

49th Separate Guards Chemical Protection Company

1st separate motor transport battalion of delivery

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Fuel and lubricants, 05/15/1943 renamed into the 357th separate auto transport company for the supply of fuel and lubricants

In May 1943, the 21st separate tank regiment was reorganized into the 37th Guards Tank Brigade, and the 20th regiment was withdrawn from the corps (which did not change again until the end of the fighting).

## 51st Army

In the summer of 1942, fighting in the Stalingrad direction, on July 21, 1942, the army headquarters moved to Zimovniki. In pursuance of the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 170529 dated 25.7.42 on the occupation of the southern bank of the river. Don from Upper Kurmoyarskaya to Azov by the troops of the Southern Front S.M. Budyonny ordered the exclusion of the 51st Army from the troops of the North Caucasian Front and transfer from 22.00 on July 25, 1942 to the Southern Front. At that time, it included the 138th, 91st, 157th and 302nd rifle and 115th cavalry divisions.

On the night of July 26, 1942, the commander of the Southern Front, Lieutenant General R.Ya.Malinovsky, arrived in Zimovniki to receive the 51st Army. In connection with the unification of the North Caucasian and Southern Fronts, the 51st Army is included in the newly formed Don Operational Group under the command of Malinovsky.

From 12.00 on July 31, 1942, on the basis of the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 170539, the 51st Army was transferred to the Stalingrad Front for the purpose of convenience of command and control. The army suffered heavy losses in previous battles and was actually one headquarters of formations. The number of its personnel was about 3000 people.

After the inclusion of the 51st Army in the Stalingrad Front, they began to withdraw it to the Krasnoarmeysk region, but the offensive of the German 4th Panzer Army forced the remnants of the 51st Army to be sent to cover the Zimovniki region, reinforcing it with two fresh rifle divisions. However, by August 6, 1942, the 51st Army again lost its combat effectiveness and began to retreat to Kal

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mykia. On August 12, 1942, she suffered heavy losses and left the city of Elista. She retreated to the Volga and, breaking away from the enemy, received reinforcements.

The 51st Army began fighting on August 28 against the 4th Romanian Army. In November 1942, she received a significant replenishment and participated in Operation Uranus. In December 1942, the 51st Army, having reached the Kotelnikovo area, came into combat contact with the Don Army Group. Having suffered heavy losses from the advancing divisions of Manstein, the army retreated east to the Aksai River. Only the timely approach of three fresh



divisions and the 2nd Guards Army saved the 51st Army from complete defeat.

Subsequently, having restored combat readiness, the 51st Army launched an offensive in the Rostov direction. On January 1, 1943, the army became subordinate to the Southern Front.

Composition of the 51st Army on | August 1942:

91st Rifle Division - Major General Kalinin (August 1 - December 31, 1942)

138th Rifle Division - Colonel Lyudnikov (July 17, 1942 - February 2, 1943)

157th Rifle Division - Colonel Kuropatenko (July 17, 1942 - February 2, 1943)

302nd Rifle Division - Colonel Makarchuk (July 17, 1942 - February 2, 1943)

115th Cavalry Division - Colonel Skorokhod (August 1 - October 19, 1942)

135th tank brigade

155th tank brigade

125th separate tank battalion

24th division of armored trains

457th Artillery Regiment of the RGK

1169th Artillery Regiment of the RGK

1188th anti-tank artillery regiment

1246th anti-tank artillery regiment

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1247th anti-tank artillery regiment

18th Guards Mortar Regiment

19th Guards Mortar Regiment

388th anti-aircraft artillery regiment

On August 18, 1942, units of the Stalingrad Military District were included in the army:

78th fortified area

118th fortified area

The composition of the 51st Army on November 19, 1942:

4th Mechanized Corps

4th Cavalry Corps

302nd Rifle Division

38th motorized rifle brigade

254th tank brigade

85th Guards Artillery Regiment

1105th Artillery Regiment of the RGK

1168th Artillery Regiment of the RGK

491st anti-tank artillery regiment

492nd anti-tank artillery regiment

1246th anti-tank artillery regiment

125th Mortar Regiment

47th Guards Mortar Regiment

80th Guards Mortar Regiment

205th engineering brigade

275th engineering brigade

742nd Engineering Brigade

Composition of the 51st Army on November 28, 1942. The 51st Army included:

300th Rifle Division - Colonel Afonin (October 11 - December 31, 1942) 87th Rifle Division - Colonel Kazartsev

(July 31 - September 14 and November 26 - December 31, 1942) 23rd tank brigade - Colonel Burdov 20th anti-tank artillery brigade

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### 13th Panzer Corps

Formed in April 1942 in Stalingrad as the 13th Tank Corps. By order of the NPO No. 13 of January 9, 1943, the 13th Tank Corps was awarded the honorary title of the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps.

Command staff of the corps:

Corps commanders: Major General of Tank Forces Shurov Pyotr Evdokimovich (from 05/23/1942 to 07/02/1942), died of wounds on 07/02/1942;

Major General of Tank Troops (from 08/30/1943 Lieutenant General) Tanaschishin Trofim Ivanovich (from 07/17/1942 to 03/31/1944).

Corps chiefs of staff lieutenant colonel (colonel) Zhdanov Vladimir Ivanovich [from 05/19/1942 to 01/09/1943]

Body Composition:

Corps management

65th tank brigade

85th tank brigade

88th tank brigade

20th motorized rifle brigade

34th separate mine engineering company

In June 1942, the 65th and 88th tank brigades left the corps, and the 158th and 167th tank brigades were included in the corps in their place.

Composition of the corps from the beginning of July 1942:

Corps management

85th tank brigade

158th tank brigade of heavy tanks

167th tank brigade

20th motorized rifle brigade

On July 22, 1942, by Directive of the Supreme Command Headquarters No. 994125, the corps was included in the 1st Tank Army and replaced

nil all three of his tank brigades.

Compound:

Corps management

163rd tank brigade

166th tank brigade

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169th tank brigade

20th motorized rifle brigade

84th Mobile Repair Base

Combat and strength

6th Guards brigade, according to the list - 44 T-34s, on the move - 13 T-34s, under repair - 17 T-34s, irretrievable losses - 14 T-34s

13th brigade, according to the list - 44 T-34s, on the move - 11 T-34s, under repair - 12 T-34s, irretrievable losses - 21 T-34s

254th brigade, according to the list - 32 T-34, 16 T-70, on the move - 6 T-34, 4 T-70, under repair - 15 T-34, 7 T-70, irretrievable losses - 11 T-34, 5 T-70

On August 5, 1942, by the Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 170554 of 08/05/1942, the Stalingrad Front was divided into Stalingrad and South-Eastern and the corps was included in the South-Eastern Front. In August 1942 he relieved all three of his tank brigades for the second time.

Compound:

Corps management

6th Guards Tank Brigade

13th tank brigade

254th tank brigade

38th motorized rifle brigade

84th Mobile Repair Base

Composition of the corps since September 1942:

Corps management

13th tank brigade

39th tank brigade

56th tank brigade

38th motorized rifle brigade

84th mobile repair base.

On August 12, 1942, there were:

- according to the list - 120 T-34, 16 T-70, 2 T-60, on the move - 24 T-34, 1 T-70, 1 T-60, under repair - 43 T-34, 1 T-60, 12 T-70s, irretrievable losses - 53 T-34s, 3 T-70s.

- 6th Guards. brigade, according to the list - 44 T-34, 2 T-60, on the move - 10 T-34, | T-60, under repair - 14 T-34, 1 T-60, irretrievable losses - 20 T-34

- 13th brigade, according to the list - 44 T-34s, on the move - 10 T-34s, under repair - 12 T-34s, irretrievable losses - 22 T-34s

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- 254th brigade, according to the list - 32 T-34, 16 T-70, on the move - 4 T-34, 1 T-70, under repair - 17 T-34, 12 T-70, irretrievable losses - 11 T -34, 3 T-70

From October 1942, the corps was transferred to the staff of the mechanized corps, but with the preservation of the name tank. |

Compound:

Corps management

17th mechanized brigade.

176th Tank Regiment

61st mechanized brigade

44th Tank Regiment

62nd mechanized brigade

163rd Tank Regiment

35th Tank Regiment

166th Tank Regiment

398th anti-aircraft artillery regiment

565th anti-tank artillery regiment

348th Separate Guards Mortar Battalion

(M-13) |

214th separate sapper battalion

separate reconnaissance battalion

34th separate mine engineering company

84th Field Repair Base

On 12/12/1942, there were 49 tanks, Tue. hours: 28 T-34 and 21 T-70 tanks.

4th Cavalry Corps

The 4th Cavalry Corps was formed in September 1942 on the basis of cavalry units of the Central Asian Military District. At the beginning of October 1942, the corps arrived in the Stalingrad region. 80% of the corps was staffed by natives of Central Asia. Most of the personnel of the corps did not know the Russian language. As a result, the 4th Cavalry Corps was poorly controlled and actually not combat-ready.

After two months of fighting, the corps suffered great

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losses in people and his personnel were replaced by soldiers of Slavic nationality.

Corps Commander - Lieutenant General Shapkin

Chief of Staff - Colonel Shevchuk

Compound:

61st Cavalry Division - Colonel Stavenkov (October 11 - December 31, 1942)

81st Cavalry Division - Colonel Baumstein (October 11 - December 31, 1942)

149th anti-tank artillery regiment

4th Panzer Army (Germany)

Formed in February 1941 on the basis of the headquarters of the 16th motorized corps as the 4th tank group. The first commander is Colonel-General Erich Hoepner. As part of the Army Group "North" took part in the attack on the USSR and the attack on Leningrad.

In September 1941, she was transferred to the Army Group Center for an attack on Moscow. She took part in the Vyazemsky battle and the Moscow battle. For an unauthorized retreat near Moscow, the army commander E. Gepner was removed from command and dismissed in disgrace.

In January 1942, the group was renamed the 4th Panzer Army. The first commander is Colonel-General Herman Goth. She took part in the Battle of Kharkov in May 1942 and the subsequent offensive on Voronezh and Rostov-on-Don. During the "Operation Blau" was originally part of Army Group "A", advancing to the Caucasus, but then transferred to Group "B" - to the Stalingrad direction. The 24th tank division from the 4th TA, together with the 6th army of Paulus, got inside the Stalingrad pocket and was defeated and destroyed.

Army commanders:

Colonel General E. Gepner (February 15, 1941 - January 7, 1942)

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Colonel General R. Ruoff (January 8, 1942 - May 31, 1942)

Colonel General G. Goth (May 31, 1942 - November 10, 1943)

Colonel General E. Raus (November 10, 1943 - April 21, 1944) [1]

Colonel General J. Harpe (May 18, 1944 - June 28, 1944)

General of Tank Forces V. Nering (June 28, 1944 - August 5, 1944)

General of the Panzer Troops H. Balck (August 5, 1944 - September 21, 1944)

general of tank troops F.-G. Grezer (September 21, 1944 - May 8, 1945)

The composition of the army on October 2, 1941:

57th Motorized Corps (General of Tank Forces A. Kuntzen)

20th Panzer Division

3rd motorized division

SS Division "Reich"

46th Motorized Corps (General of Tank Forces G. von Fittingof-Scheel)

5th Panzer Division

11th Panzer Division

252nd Infantry Division

40th Motorized Corps (General of Tank Forces G. Stumme)

2nd Panzer Division

10th Panzer Division

258th Infantry Division

12th Army Corps (Infantry General V. Schroth)

98th Infantry Division

34th Infantry Division

The leadership of the parties involved in the Battle of Stalingrad (the stage of the counteroffensive, the outer front of the encirclement)

Stalingrad Front

Commander Colonel General A. I. Eremenko Member of the Military Council N. S. Khrushchev Chief of Staff Major General I. S. Varennikov

8th Air Army

Commander Major General of Aviation T. T. Khryukin Chief of Staff Colonel N. G. Seleznev

51st Army

Commander Major General N. I. Trufanov

Member of the Military Council, Major General A. E. Khalezov

Chief of Staff Colonel A. M. Kuznetsov

4th mechanized (from 18.12 - 3rd guards) corps - major general of tank troops V. T. Volsky

13th Panzer Corps - Major General of Panzer



troops T. I. Tanaschishin

4th Cavalry Corps - Lieutenant General T. T. Shapkin

2nd Guards Army

Commander Major General N. I. Trufanov Member of the Military  
Council Major General A. E. Khalezov Chief of Staff Colonel A. M. Kuznetsov

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1st Guards Rifle Corps - Major General I. I. Missan

13th Guards Rifle Corps - Major General P. G. Chanchibadze

7th Tank Corps (since December 29 - 3rd Guards) - Major General of the Panzer  
Troops of the HRC. A. Rotmistrov.

2nd Guards Mechanized Corps - Major General K. V. Sviridov

6th Mechanized Corps - Major General of Tank Troops S. I. Bogdanov

5th shock army

Commander Lieutenant General M. M. Popov

Member of the Military Council Colonel I. B. Bulatov

Chief of Staff Colonel V. F. Bogdanovich

| th Panzer Corps - Major General of Tank Troops V. V. Butkov

23rd Tank Corps - Colonel V.V. Koshelev, from 29.11 - Major General of Tank Forces  
E.G. Pushkin

Soviet command

Vasilevsky Alexander Mikhailovich

Born September 30, 1895 in the family of a priest. In 1909 he graduated from the  
Kineshma Theological School, and in the summer of 1914 - the penultimate course of the  
seminary. With the beginning of the First World War, he was sent to the Moscow  
Aleksievsky Military School, in May 1915 he

was promoted to lieutenant and sent to the troops. He commanded a company, a battalion, rose to the rank of staff captain. In May 1919, he was drafted into the Red Army and appointed as a platoon instructor (assistant platoon commander) to a reserve battalion that formed line marching companies for the front. In June, he, at the head of a specially created detachment of 100 people, was sent to fight against the kulaks. Then the detachment joined the Red Army, where Vasilevsky commanded a company, a battalion, and was an assistant regiment commander. civil war

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finished on the Western Front. From 1920, commander of a separate battalion, from 1921, chief of staff of a brigade, from 1922, assistant commander, and then acting commander of the 142nd regiment. In 1924 he was appointed head of the school for junior commanders of the 48th Infantry Division. In 1927, he completed the Shot courses and was appointed commander of the 144th Infantry Regiment. Since the spring of 1931 - assistant to the head of the combat training department of the Volga Military District. When the Military Academy of the General Staff opened in Moscow in the summer of 1936, Colonel A.M. Vasilevsky became her listener, but studied for only a year and was released ahead of schedule. In October 1937, he was appointed head of the department in charge of the operational training of senior officers at the General Staff, and concurrently held the position of deputy head of the operational department. From May 1940, he became the first deputy chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff, and from August 1941, the head of this directorate and deputy chief of the General Staff. Since June 1942 - Chief of the General Staff. From January 18, 1943, General of the Army, from February 16, 1943, Marshal of the Soviet Union. In 1944 he became a Hero of the Soviet Union and holder of the highest military order "Victory" No. 2. In February 1945 he was appointed commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front. On April 10, the troops of his front captured Koenigsberg. Since the summer of 1945 - Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet troops in the Far East. In March 1946, he again headed the General Staff, took the post of Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces of the USSR. From November 1948, he was the 1st Deputy, and from March 1949, the Minister of the Armed Forces (Minister of War) of the USSR. After the division on February 25, 1950, of the War Ministry into the Naval and War Ministries, he remained at the head of the second. After the death of I.V. Stalin, when N.A. became Minister of War. Bulganin, Vasilevsky was appointed his 1st deputy, and when a single Ministry was created on March 15, 1953

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defense, becomes a simple deputy minister. In 1956 he was appointed Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR for military science. In November 1957, he was dismissed and appointed chairman of the Committee of War Veterans. Since January 1959 in the Group of General Inspectors of the USSR Ministry of Defense. He died on December 5, 1977, the ashes were buried in the Kremlin wall.

Malinovsky Rodion Yakovlevich

Born on November 11 (23), 1898 in Odessa. Father Yakov Vasilyevich and mother Varvara Grigorievna (nee Are) are Turkic Karaites by nationality. Rodion graduated from the parochial school in 1911. In the autumn of 1915 he was called up for military service. Private, participant in a number of battles of the First World War on the Western Front. Awarded with the George Cross. In 1916-1918 in France as part of the Russian Expeditionary Corps. Marked with two combat medals. Since the spring of 1919 in the Red Army, he participated in battles with the White Guards as part of the 27th Infantry Division of the Eastern Front. A year later, he graduated from junior high school. Commander of a rifle platoon, commander of a machine gun team, chief of staff and commander of a rifle battalion. After graduating in 1930 from the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze was appointed chief of staff of a cavalry regiment, then a cavalry division, and deputy commander of a rifle corps. In 1937-1938, he was a military adviser in Spain, a participant in the battles in Valencia, the defense of Madrid, and the battle of Guadalajara. Awarded the Order of the Red Banner. Since the summer of 1939, the brigade commander, senior lecturer in the headquarters service of the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze. Candidate of military sciences. Since April 1940, Major General. On March 7, 1941, he was appointed commander of the 48th Rifle Corps of the Odessa Military District. During the Great Patriotic War, commander of a rifle corps, commander of the 6th and 66th armies, lieutenant general, commander of the 2nd guards army, deputy commander of the Voronezh Front, colonel general, command

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serving with the troops of the Southern, Southwestern (3rd Ukrainian) fronts. From April 1943 he was General of the Army, from August 1944 Marshal of the Soviet Union. He led troops in border battles, in the battle of Stalingrad, in the battles for the liberation of Donbass and Right-Bank Ukraine, in the Iasi-Chisinau, Debrecen, Budapest, and Vienna operations. In the Soviet-Japanese war, the commander of the troops of the Transbaikal Front. In the postwar years, commander of the troops of the Transbaikal-Amur Military District, commander-in-chief of the troops of the Far East, commander of the troops of the Far Eastern military district, commander-in-chief of the Ground Forces. Juice-

October 1957 to March 1967 Minister of Defense of the USSR. Twice Hero of the Soviet Union (awarded the title in 1945 and 1958), People's Hero of Yugoslavia (1964), cavalier of thirteen orders of the USSR, including "Victory", two orders of Suvorov [th degree, Kutuzov 1st degree. Author of a number of works on the development of the armed forces and the art of war. He died on March 31, 1967, was buried in Moscow on Red Square near the Kremlin wall.

13th Guards rifle corps

Chanchibadze Porfiry Georgievich

Born on December 26, 1901 in Makharadze, Georgia.

Military Red Army from October 1921. In 1922 he graduated from the Georgian Joint Military School, in 1927 - advanced training courses, in 1940 - courses "Shot" and in absentia two courses of the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze.

In the interwar period, from December 1922, he served in the 2nd Georgian Rifle Regiment as a platoon commander, and from August 1924, as a company commander. Since 1927 - Assistant Chief of Staff of the same regiment. In March 1929, he took part in the fight against armed formations in Adzharia. Since October 1930 in the Far East. Since 1932, assistant chief of staff and battalion commander of the 9th collective farm regiment of the 3rd collective farm rifle division. In the future, the commander's wreath

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207th Infantry Regiment, commander of the 206th Infantry Regiment of the 69th Infantry Division (3rd Collective Farm Division). For success in military and political training, he was awarded the Order of the Red Star. Since July 1940, after completing the "Shot" courses, Colonel P. G. Chanchibadze, commander of the 120th Rifle, since March 1941 - the 120th Motorized Regiment of the 69th Motorized (107th Tank) Division on Far Eastern Front.

He entered the Great Patriotic War in July 1941 as commander of the 107th tank (moto rifle) division as part of the 30th army of the Western (Kalinin) front. He took an active part in the defense and counteroffensive near Moscow. He was promoted to the rank of Major General and was awarded two Orders of the Red Banner.

From January 1942 - commander of the 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle (49th Guards Rifle) Division, from November 14, 1942 - commander of the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, headed by the 2nd Guards Army of the Stalingrad Front took part in the defeat of the Kotelnikovskaya enemy grouping.

He commanded this corps until May 1944. He took part in the Donbass, Melitopol, Crimean offensive operations.

At the end of the first half of 1944, for several days (May 28, 1944–June 4, 1944), he was commander of the 72nd Rifle Corps, and then, until the end of the war, commander of the 2nd Guards Army.

After the end of the war, he was put at the disposal of the Minister of Defense, from March 1946 - commander of the 11th Rifle Corps of the Moscow Military District. After graduating from the higher academic courses of the Higher Military Academy named after K. E. Voroshilov in 1948, he was appointed commander of the 11th Rifle Corps of the Gorky Military District.

Colonel General. Hero of the Soviet Union (19.04.45). Awarded two Orders of Lenin, three Orders of the Red Banner, Orders of Suvorov 1st and 2nd class

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nor, Kutuzov and Bogdan Khmel'nitsky 2nd degree, Red Star.

He died on March 14, 1950. He was buried in Moscow at the Novodevichy cemetery.

51st Army

Trufanov Nikolay Ivanovich

Born on May 15, 1900 in the village of Velikoye, Yaroslavl Region. He was drafted into the army in 1919. During the Civil War, he was a private, head of a field telephone office.

In 1925 he graduated from the Joint Military School named after the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. He served as deputy military commissar of a cavalry regiment, commander of a cavalry platoon, assistant commander and commander of a cavalry squadron, head of a regimental school, assistant commander and chief of staff of a cavalry regiment.

In 1939 he graduated from the MV Frunze Military Academy and was appointed chief of staff of the 4th Infantry Division. Member of the Soviet-Finnish war. Since January 1941 - assistant commander of the 23rd Rifle Corps, since March - Chief of Staff of the 28th Mechanized Corps.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, N. I. Trufanov was appointed chief of staff of the 47th Army of the Transcaucasian Military District. In November 1941, he

Chief of Staff, Chief of Logistics, Deputy Commander of the 47th Army.  
From April 1942 - commander of the 1st separate rifle corps.

In July 1942, N. I. Trufanov was appointed commander of the 51st Army, which fought on the outskirts of Stalingrad, participated in the encirclement of the enemy near Stalingrad and in the defeat of the enemy's Kotelnikov group, which was trying to unblock the fascist troops surrounded near Stalingrad.

Since June 1943, N. I. Trufanov was the deputy commander of the 69th Army. On the night of July 12, at the head of a combined detachment, he made a deep detour of the right flank

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head of the 2nd SS Panzer Division of the enemy and suddenly attacked its rear. This ensured the successful development of the oncoming tank battle by the main forces of the 5th Guards Tank Army near Prokhorovka.

Since March 1945, N.I. Trufanov was the commander of the 25th Rifle Corps. Participated in the Berlin Operation.

After the end of the Great Patriotic War - in responsible positions in the Soviet military administration in Germany. From June 1950 - head of the department for combat and physical training of the troops of the Far East. From January 1954 - Commander of the Army, from January 1956 - 1st Deputy Commander of the Far Eastern Military District. Since June 1957 - chief military adviser to the PLA. Colonel General (1955). Retired since 1960.

He was awarded two Orders of Lenin, three Orders of the Red Banner, two Orders of Kutuzov 1st class, Orders of Suvorov 2nd class, Orders of the Patriotic War 1st class, Red Star.

He died on February 21, 1982 in Kharkov.

1st Guards Rifle Corps

Missan Ivan Ilyich

Born on January 18, 1903; Berdyansk, now Zaporozhye region Ukrainian. Lieutenant General (1943).

In the Red Army from January 1919 to April 1921 and October 1921

He graduated from the Berdyansk Infantry and Kerch Infantry Command Courses (1922), the Odessa Infantry School (1925), the VAK at the Higher Military Academy. K. E. Vo-

Roshilov (1948).

In the Civil War, from January 1919, Comrade I. I. Missan served as a Red Army soldier in the guard battalion in the city of Berdyansk. Then, from July of the same year, he served in the 58th Infantry Division of the Southern Front, a Red Army soldier of the 517th Infantry Regiment and an ON battalion with this division, from March 1920 - a Red Army soldier of the food detachment at the Berdyansk district food

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military committee. Fought on the Southern Front against the troops of General A.I. the main forces of the army, then fought with Denikin's troops near Kiev. Participated in the Soviet-Polish war of 1920 as part of the South-Western Front.

After the war, in April 1921, I. I. Missan was transferred to the reserve. In October 1921, he was again drafted into the Red Army, after which he studied at the Berdyansk, Kerch, Yekaterinoslav infantry courses, at the Odessa infantry school. As a cadet, he took part in the fight against rebels in Ukraine. From August 1925 he commanded a platoon in the 135th rifle regiment of the 45th rifle division of the UVO and at the Military-Political School of this district, from September 1927 - assistant commander and company commander of the 133rd rifle regiment of the same division. From May 1931 - head of the 5th department of the headquarters of the Office of the Head of Works No. 51 of the UVO. From April 1933, I. I. Missan was assistant commander of the battalion of the 152nd rifle regiment of the 51st rifle division of the UVO, from January 1934 - commander of the battalion of the 7th rifle regiment of the 2nd rifle division and [79 -th Infantry Regiment of the 60th Infantry Division as part of the UVO and KVO. From October 1938 - commander of the 115th Infantry Regiment of the 62nd Infantry Division in the KOVO and LVO. In this position, he participated in the Soviet-Finnish war of 1939-1940. From July 1940 - for the deputy commander, and from June 3, 1941 - commander of the 180th rifle division of the 22nd rifle corps of the 27th army of PribOVO. The division and corps were formed on the basis of the former Estonian People's Army, were on a reduced staffing basis and were staffed by only 30-40% of personnel, while more than half of the command staff were from former Estonian officers.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, on June 22, 1941, units of the division were withdrawn from the camps in the Tspetseri region to permanent deployment points in the regions of Tallinn, Pärnu, Viljandi, where they carried out mobilization

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and bringing to full combat readiness. Upon completion of mobilization on July 8, the division and corps were redeployed to the area of the city of Pskhov, where, as part of the 27th, and on July 11, the 11th armies of the North-Western Front, they participated in defensive battles in the Pskov-Ostrov UR, in front-line counterattacks near Soltsy and Staraya Russa. In these battles, serious losses were inflicted on the enemy. Later, as part of the army, the division under his command took part in the hostilities of the troops of the North-Western Front in the regions of Staraya Russa and Demyansk. In March 1942, for the heroism, courage of the personnel, high military skill, it was transformed into the 28th Guards. From September 10, 1942, I. I. Missan - commander of the 1st Guards Rifle Corps, which was part of the 2nd Guards, 51st Armies of the Don, Stalingrad, Southern, 4th Ukrainian, 1st Baltic, 3rd Belorussian fronts and participated in the Rostov, Donbass, Crimean, Siauliai, Memel offensive operations, in the liberation of the cities of Novocherkassk, Volnovakha, Jelgava, Telshiai. General I. I. Missan showed himself to be "... a commander who does not get lost in difficult conditions. He takes decisions quickly and achieves the fulfillment of combat orders ... He can organize the interaction of military branches ... He is sufficiently prepared in operational-tactical terms. He is working to improve his knowledge... he is disciplined, courageous, demanding of himself and his subordinates" (from a combat description). Since December 1944, Lieutenant General I. I. Missan was commander of the 103rd Rifle Corps of the 43rd Army of the 3rd Belorussian Front. The corps took an active part in the Insterburg-Koenigsberg and Zemland offensive operations, in the liberation of the city of Tilsit (Sovetsk).

After the war, from September 1945, I. I. Missan was at the disposal of the NPO GUK. Since January 1946 - commander of the 40th Rifle Corps, then was appointed deputy commander of the 28th Army in the BVO. Since March 1947 - a student of the Higher Attestation Commission at the Higher Military Academy

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them. K. E. Voroshilov, after their completion in April 1948, he was transferred to the reserve.

Awarded with the Order of Lenin, 5 Orders of the Red Banner, Orders of Suvorov 2nd class, Kutuzov 2nd class, Bogdan Khmelnitsky 2nd class, medals.

He died on April 24, 1980 in Odessa.

Deputy Commander of the 2nd Guards Army

Kreyzer Yakov Grigorievich



Born October 22 (November 4), 1905 in Voronezh in the family of a military official. Educated in a classical gymnasium. In 1921 he was drafted into the Red Army. In 1923 he graduated from the Voronezh Infantry School, in 1931 - courses "Shot", in February 1941 - advanced training courses for senior officers at the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze. Since the summer of 1923, commander of a rifle platoon, then a rifle company, rifle battalion, head of a regimental school in the Kiev and Belorussian military districts. Since 1937, assistant commander, a year later - regiment commander of the Moscow proletarian rifle division. Since January 1939, assistant commander of the 84th Infantry Division. In August of the following year, he was appointed commander of the 172nd Infantry Division, Colonel. At an inspection check in the spring of 1941, the division was recognized as the best in the district.

Since the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the commander of the 1st Moscow Motorized Rifle Division. On July 22, 1941, he was the first of the unit commanders to be awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. After completing an accelerated course at the Military Academy of the General Staff, he was appointed commander of the 57th Army. From August 1941 he commanded the 3rd Army, which took part in the Tula defensive and Yelets offensive operations. He held the post of deputy commander of the reserve, then commander of the 2nd Guards armies. Since August 1943, the commander of the 51st Army, whose troops participated in the Melitopol, Nikopol-Krivo Rog, Crimean, Polotsk, Riga and Memel

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offensive operations. He successfully led military operations in the Western, Bryansk, Stalingrad, Southern, 4th Ukrainian, Leningrad, 1st and 2nd Baltic fronts. He finished the war with the rank of Colonel General.

In the postwar years, Yakov Grigoryevich, having graduated from the Higher Academic Courses at the Military Academy of the General Staff, commanded the combined arms army, later - the troops of the South Ural (from May 1955), Transbaikalia (from February 1958), Ural (from June 1960) and the Far East (since July 1961) military districts. He made a significant contribution to the reorganization of motorized rifle troops, their equipping with means of delivering weapons of mass destruction. From November 1963, he was the head of the Higher Officer Courses "You Strel". Since May 1962, General of the Army. Subsequently, adviser-inspector of the group of general inspectors of the USSR Ministry of Defense.

Cavalier of thirteen Soviet orders, including Suvorov 1st class, Kutuzov 1st class, Suvorov 2nd class. "In love with my work, I know very well

a military leader who deals with military issues, "general A.S. wrote about him. Zhadov. He died on November 29, 1969 in Moscow and was buried at the Novodevichy Cemetery.

German command

Army Group "Don" - Field Marshal E. von Manstein

6th Army - Colonel General (Field Marshall General) F. Paulus

Army Group "Goth" - Colonel General G. Goth (since 11/28/1942).

4th Panzer Army - Colonel General G. Goth

48th Tank Corps - General of Tank Forces von Knobelsdorf (November 26, 1942 - Major General G. Eberbach).

57th Panzer Corps - General of Panzer Troops Krichner

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3rd Army (Romania) - Colonel General Dmitre sku

4th Army (Romania) - Colonel General Constant Tinescu

Manstein Erich von (Lewinsky)

Born November 24, 1887 in Berlin in the family of Artillery General E. von Lewinsky. He was the tenth child in the family, and since his aunt, his mother's sister, was childless, she was allowed to adopt Erich. His stepfather was Lieutenant General Manstein.

Erich was educated in Strasbourg at several cadet schools. Starting military service in 1906, he graduated from the military academy in 1914. During the First World War, he held a number of staff positions on the Eastern and Western fronts. After the battle of Verdun, he was appointed chief of the operational department of the cavalry division.

Later he continued to serve in the Reichswehr. Since 1935, the head of the operational department and the 1st chief quarters of the master of the General Staff of the Ground Forces. Participated in the occupation of the Sudetenland, in the Polish campaign, since 1939 the chief of staff of a number of army groups, one of the authors of the plan to defeat France by applying

strike through the Ardennes.

Since February 1941 - commander of the 56th tank corps. With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, his tank corps advanced in the Baltic states, then - on Leningrad.

From September 12, 1941 - commander of the 11th Army operating in the Crimea, Colonel General.

From November 1942 - commander of Army Group "Don". He was entrusted with the rescue of the 6th Army of Paulus, surrounded at Stalingrad, and the restoration of the southern sector of the Eastern Front, Field Marshal.

Commander of Army Group South. On March 30, 1944, A. Hitler summoned Manstein to his Obersalzberg, where he awarded the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and

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with a sword, after which he announced the removal from duty.

In 1945 he fell into the hands of the British, spent four years in prison. In 1949, in Hamburg, he appeared before a British military tribunal, which cleared him of all charges of crimes against civilians. However, he was found guilty as a war criminal and sentenced to 18 years in prison. Later, this term was reduced to 12 years, and in August 1952, Manstein was completely released from prison "for medical reasons." He worked as an adviser to the commander of the West German army. Wrote the memoir *Lost Victories*.

He died in Bavaria on June 12, 1973, at the age of 85.

Since childhood, having absorbed the spirit of the Prussian military, having received a good professional education and extensive combat experience, E. von Manstein was characterized by his contemporaries as a daring, prudent military leader, cunning and tireless in the search for optimal solutions on the battlefield, a master of counterattacks, detours and girth "The general opinion among the generals whom I had the opportunity to interrogate in 1954," wrote B. H. Liddell Hart in January 1958, "was that Field Marshal von Manstein proved himself to be the most talented commander in the entire army, and it was precisely First of all, they would like to see him in the role of commander in chief.

Paulus Friedrich

Born in 1890. In military service since 1909, cadet. In 1911 he graduated from a military school. Member of the First World War, he then went through a series of

military positions in the Reichswehr. In 1935 he was appointed chief of staff of the tank troops and in this post did a lot for the development of the armored forces of the Wehrmacht. During World War II, he assumed the position of chief of staff of the army. And only having received such a great practical experience, in 1940 he was appointed 1st Chief Quartermaster of the General Staff of the German Ground Forces. From January 1942 - I command

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general field marshal (January 1943). January 31, 1943 surrendered to Soviet troops. In 1944 he became a member of the Free Germany Committee. After the end of the war, he was released from captivity. Since 1953 he lived in Dresden.

#### Goth German

Born in 1885. An infantry officer, later a major commander of tank troops. Colonel General (1940). Commander of the 3rd Panzer Group (1941), 17th Army (1941-1942) and 4th Panzer Army (1942-1943). In 1943, he was removed from office by Hitler and did not hold any more prominent positions. After the war, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison, but then this term was reduced. He was released in the mid-1950s. He settled in Gozlar, where he died on January 25, 1971 at the age of 85.

#### Heinrich Eberbach

Born November 24, 1895.

| July 1914 he entered the military service, fanen junker (candidate officer). Since August 28, 1914 - on the Western Front. Since February 1915 - lieutenant, commander of an infantry platoon. In September 1915, he was seriously wounded, captured by the French (in December 1916, he was placed in a hospital in Switzerland). In September 1917, he fled Switzerland, again in military service. Since June 1918 - as a liaison officer with the Turkish army in Palestine. In September 1918, he was taken prisoner by the British. During the war he was awarded the Iron Crosses of both degrees and the Knight's Cross (Württemberg).

In November 1919, he was released from captivity. In December 1919 he joined the police.

In August 1935 he returned to military service with the rank of major. By the beginning of World War II, he was commander of a tank regiment, lieutenant colonel.

In September-October 1939 he participated in the Pol

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campaign. He was awarded the bars to the Iron Crosses of both degrees (repeated award).

In May - June 1940 - participated in the French campaign. Awarded the Knight's Cross (No. 84). From August 1940 - Colonel.

From June 22, 1941 - participated in the German-Soviet war. Fights (as part of the Army Group Center) in Belorussia, then in the Moscow direction. In December 1941 - awarded the Oak Leaves (No. 42) to the Knight's Cross.

Since January 1942 - commander of the 4th Panzer Division. Since March 1942 - Major General. Since November 26, 1942 - commander of the 48th tank corps. December 1, 1942 - seriously wounded, after the hospital - in the command reserve.

Since January 1943 - lieutenant general. Since February 1943 - inspector of tank troops. Since August 1943 - in the rank of general of tank troops. October 15-22, 1943 - temporarily commanded the 47th Tank Corps, then again the 48th Tank Corps, then November 15-25, 1943 - the 40th Tank Corps. On November 25, 1943, he was again an inspector of tank troops.

Since August 5, 1944 - commander of the 5th tank army (on the Western Front). August 31, 1944 taken into British captivity.

Died July 13, 1992.

Otto von Knobelsdorff

Born March 31, 1886.

In April 1905, he entered military service as a fan junker (candidate officer) in an infantry regiment. From August 1906 - lieutenant.

At the beginning of the First World War - at the headquarters of an infantry regiment, from November 1914 - a senior lieutenant. In August 1915 he was seriously wounded. From November 1915 - commander of an infantry company. From March 1916 - captain. In June-September 1916 - battalion commander. Since October 1916 - in various staff positions. In October 1918 - again seriously wounded (in the hospital

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until January 1919). During the war, he was awarded the Iron Crosses of both degrees and five more orders.

After the war he continued to serve in the Reichswehr. By the beginning of World War II, he had risen to the rank of major general.

Participated in the Polish campaign. In the French campaign - the commander of the 19th Infantry Division. In November 1940, the division was reorganized into a tank division, von Knobelsdorff was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general.

Since June 22, 1941, he participated in the German-Soviet war, fighting in Belarus, in the Smolensk region, near Moscow. In September 1941, von Knobelsdorff was awarded the Knight's Cross. In early January 1942, Lieutenant General von Knobelsdorff fell seriously ill and was evacuated to a hospital in Germany.

In May 1942 - commander of the 10th Army Corps (in the area of Staraya Russa), in July 1942 - commander of the 2nd Army Corps (in the Demyansk area), in July - October 1942 - the Knobelsdorf corps . Since August 1942 he has been in the rank of general of tank troops. From October 1942 - commander of the 24th tank corps (near Stalingrad), from December 1942 - commander of the 48th tank corps. In February 1943 he was awarded the Golden German Cross.

Since October 1943, he was seriously ill again, enlisted in the command reserve. In November 1943, he was awarded the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross for battles in the Bel city.

From February 1944 - commander of the 40th tank corps (in Ukraine). In September 1944, he was awarded the Swords (No. 100) to the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves.

In October - November 1944 - commander of the 1st Army (on the Western Front). Since December 1944 - in the command reserve. In early April 1945, he was taken prisoner by the Americans. Released from captivity in 1947.

Died October 21, 1966.

Awards: Iron Cross 2nd Class (September 19, 1914), Iron Cross 1st Class (February 27, 1915),

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Wound badge (black) (1918), Knight's Cross of the White Falcon Horde 2nd Class with Swords (Saxe-Weimar Eisenach), War Cross of Wilhelm Ernst (Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach), Knight's Cross of the Ernestine House Order 2nd Class with swords (Saxon principalities

va), Military Merit Cross (Lippe-Detmold), Military Merit Cross 3rd class with military distinction (Austria-Hungary), War Veteran's Cross of Honor, medal "In memory of | October 1938", Buckle to the Iron Cross 2nd Class (October 11, 1939), Buckle to the Iron Cross 1st Class (May 20, 1940), Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, Knight's Cross (September 17, 1941), Oak Leaves ( No. 322) (November 12, 1942), Swords (No. 100) (September 21, 1944), German Cross in Gold (February 16, 1943), medal "For the winter campaign in the East 1941/42", badge "For a tank attack" ( in silver).

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